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CAPTAIN
FANNY



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CAPTAIN FANNY.

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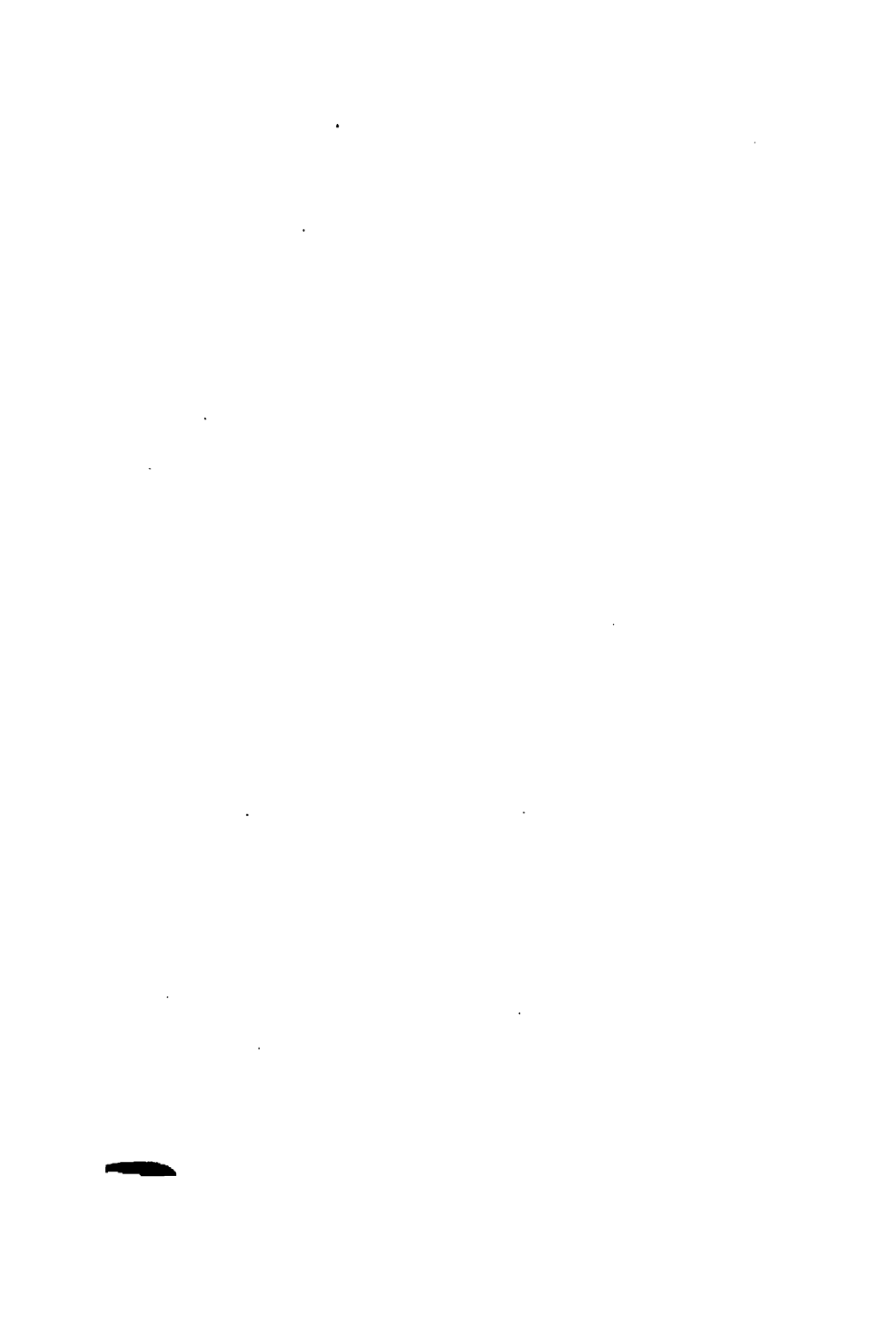
IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. II.



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CAPTAIN FANNY.

CHAPTER I.

THE PICNIC.

WILL it be wet on Tuesday? It has been blowing, on and off, half a gale of wind from the north during the week, and they say that the Downs are crowded with ships; and there is quite enough sea on to keep a bigger vessel than the "Egeria" in port. How will the weather serve on Tuesday? The yachting trip seems hopeless; and now will the north wind blow up rain and stop the picnic?

Ethel has been almost low-spirited. She

has scarcely the heart to buy some things she wants to wear at the picnic. She has rapped the old clock-faced barometer in the passage until the hand fell crazy, and dropped into thunder-storm, and there stuck.

However, the yachting dresses came home on Saturday, and kept her pretty cheerful all Sunday. The truth is, hers fitted her to perfection : she looked lovely in it, and in the cockish straw hat, with the broad band around it, gold-lettered "Defiance," and went to show herself to Fanny, who admired the fit very much, but betrayed no eagerness to try her own on, and see how the dressmaker had treated her.

Tuesday comes, and turns out very much like the five or six days which had preceded it. The wind is fresh, the clouds large and white, the sky an Italian blue.

"At all events," says Ethel, at breakfast, "it doesn't look like rain. So you see, Captain, your Colonel was right when he told us yesterday it would be fine."

"What swells we shall be, with the two sailors to wait on us!" exclaims Fan, who is in good spirits.

"Yes; and how did you repay his kindness?" says Ethel, reproachfully. "He asked you to step to the bottom of the street to look at your flag, and you said you hadn't time."

"I told you that was rude, Fanny," remarks Mrs. Rogers. "It's always worth while to accept a compliment kindly."

"I want to make him dislike me that he may fall in love with Ethel," answers Fan. "Ethel is fond of money; he likes pretty women. So it's a match; and, mammy, you must help me to get them married."

"Be careful that I don't take you at your word, dear," warbles Ethel, with an arch smile.

"I don't think when it came to the point you would like to see your flag pulled down, Fanny," says Mrs. Rogers. "It's not every girl who gets such a compliment from a man of the Colonel's position and fortune."

"Oh, I know it's a compliment, and I wish Ethel had received it, that it might be properly appreciated," answers Fanny, a little pettishly.

"Why, you are as polite, you two, over Colonel Swayne as a couple of Frenchmen trying to pass each other," cries Mrs. Rogers, with a laugh. "It's nothing but *appray voo* between you. Wait until you are sure he is in earnest before you beg each other to be allowed to resign him."

Both young ladies are greatly amused by this remark, and Fan laughs so heartily that one almost wonders Mrs. Rogers does not see there is more behind all this than she has any idea of.

The party are to be at the cottage by half-past twelve. An omnibus, large enough to hold them all, inside and out, has been hired, and will be at the door at that hour. The hampers have already been carried away to the village where the picnic is to be held by the steward of the "Egeria," and

one of the sailors, a fellow who can play the fiddle and shake a foot as well as any horn-piper in the kingdom.

So when breakfast is over the girls and Mrs. Rogers have nothing to do but get dressed, so as to receive the, picnickians when they arrive ; and the first, of course, to disappear is Ethel, for whom last evening small parcels were arriving every five minutes. Fanny, it must be confessed, gets to her room rather earlier than we should have expected from a girl who has hitherto been quite honest in her neglect of personal appearance. She, too, spent a few shillings yesterday in some odds and ends, which are to make her splendid. Surely one can never lose faith in woman's innocence whilst she continues to be pleased by feathers and trimmings !

The first to emerge is Mrs. Rogers. One would think that she had dressed herself for a voyage across the Channel. Her gown is stout ; she has put on strong boots, which creak like a man's ; a large Scotch

shawl wraps her shoulders, and her bonnet would make comfortable wear for March. One misses her muff. She makes sure of her umbrella, by laying it down in a conspicuous position on the dining-room table along with her gloves and pocket-handkerchief.

Just before the half-hour Fanny descends. Her dress is white muslin, and she wears her yachting hat, with a plain blue riband around it, perched in eighteenth century style on top of her wonderful hair. Around her is a thin blue cashmere shawl, mamma's present to her last birthday. This colour does justice to the delicious bloom on her cheeks. She looks a fine, handsome girl as she comes into the room, her beauty quite natural, her step full of grace and freedom. One may see her yesterday's purchases in the velvet and the frill round her neck, in the smart little cuffs, and in the uncommonly fine sash.

"I think you'll be glad to get rid of that shawl when you are in the omnibus,


mammy," is all the comment she makes on her mother's dress. Another time Mrs. Rogers's warm bonnet and stout boots would move Fan's kindly laughter; but she seems to have other thoughts to occupy her now.

Mrs. Rogers tells her that she looks very well; but she can't thoroughly make up her mind to approve of the hat. Isn't it just the same as men wear? She won't say it doesn't become Fanny; but she would like it better if it could be subdued somehow. It has a bold look, and exposes too much face and hair to please her. Fanny doesn't argue. She as good as agrees with her mother, but, all the same, doesn't offer to take the hat off. What mamma has really good taste in her daughter's dress? Won't she insist upon thick veils, and aren't all her leanings towards dowdiness? And can any ball dress be cut too high in the shoulders to please her? Wha new and charming fashion but is saucy and bold in her judgment?

The first to arrive is Mr. Morgan, the curate. He knocks modestly, and passes some time in polishing his boots on the door-mat. Fanny knows him, and introduces him to mamma, who is visibly impressed, as becomes an elderly lady, by his clerical waistcoat, and humbly asks him to be seated.

Our friend has black mats of whiskers, and black eyebrows, and black eyes. He is a Welshman, and speaks English with a sharp accent, and has been heard to cry "intee!" when vehement in the pulpit. He hardly looks the right sort of man for a picnic, but appearances are generally defective; he is a good-natured, honest creature, of pastoral simplicity in tastes and habits, very fond of puns, in which art some jocosely enemy of his has told him he excels, and looking upon the "March of the Men of Harlech" as the finest bit of music the world has ever produced.

He has scarcely fixed his eyes on the sky, and made the customary observations



with respect to the weather, when the Hulses arrive : two rather prim girls, and a brother with sandy hair and irregular whiskers. Mrs. Rogers bows, and smiles, and feels encumbered by numbers, and gets into the background. The idlest talk begins ; but one would hardly suspect that Fan can be so perfectly lady-like and quiet in her manner. Her charming self-possession makes the primness of the Miss Hulses appear a species of awkward austerity, and their brother, Matthew, watches her with his pale eyes over his sisters' shoulders, and nurses his knee.

The Miss Hulses are rather alike, and are dressed like twins. Here and there you observe in their hats and dresses little bursts of fashion ; one cannot particularise, but the effect is odd ; a woman's eye sees the pity of it, and a man thinks they have forgotten to put all their things on. As to Matthew, he is just a loon, with great hands and coloured linen, and

what Dickens calls a comic head of hair. If Ethel doesn't get Jack to flirt with her, she'll have no lovemaking this picnic. Morgan and Mat Hulse are thoroughly unpromising in a sentimental sense; but then one never knows what wine and moonlight will achieve, and they'll have the influence of both these things on them before they go to bed.

The next knock on the door announces the arrival of the rest of the party: to wit, Jenny and Mrs. Matthews, and Colonel Swayne and Jack Huntley, and Mr. Sampson. Miss Matthews runs in boisterously, figged out in a grey silk, and cries that they all met at the gate—wasn't it odd? Then those who don't know each other are introduced, and the little room is so full, and the noise is so great, that Mrs. Rogers can do nothing but smile from a corner, and make signs with her glove to those whom she can't approach.

"The omnibus is waiting in the road," calls out Jenny. "We all know each

other now, and there's nothing to keep us, is there?"

"Before we move," exclaims Jack, "let's be sure that all the hampers are gone in advance."

"I saw to that myself," answers Fanny. "There's nothing left but some straw."

"I shall be glad to breathe the air," cries Mrs. Rogers from the corner. "Fanny, Fanny, where's Ethel?"

But as she says this, Ethel shines upon them from the door—a most radiant presence indeed; dressed in the ravishing new hat we first beheld her in, and the morocco belt with the saucy clasp that invites the eye to her waist, and a delicate green silk dress, and a pretty little shawl over her arm.

"Isn't she clever?" says Fan to Jenny. "She expected this crush, and this is how she saves her train."

"Look at poor Mr. Sampson," answers Jenny. "He's in love with her on the spot."

The gentleman referred to is a tall young man with high stick-up collars, on the sharp edges of which his head revolves with a slowness of movement that is rather suggestive of excoriation. He is not bad looking, but highly nervous, as you may tell by the twitching of his mouth and the rapid blinking of his eyes. He is staring over the precipice of his shirt-collar at Ethel, who looks with vague eyes and a sweet smile from the passage upon the crowd in the parlour.

"We had better not keep the omnibus waiting," says Mrs. Matthews, looking around for approval of her remark. On which the Colonel very gently and politely makes his way to Mrs. Rogers, and offers her his arm. Mr. Sampson, thinking that the Colonel's example will be generally imitated, grins a ghastly smile, and presents his arm to Ethel, who makes him a lovely little bow, and says timidly, "that she thinks they will be able to get on better if they are free."

Out they all stream, Mr. Morgan making puns to the Miss Hulses, and Mat Hulse pushing close against Jenny under the impression that he is expected to pay attention to somebody, and Mr. Sampson presenting a striking back view of rigid collar, crowned with a white deer-stalking hat, and Jack talking to Fanny, and Ethel walking demurely a little in advance with Mrs. Matthews, while the Colonel, with Mrs. Rogers on his arm, leads the way.

The omnibus that is to carry them all stands near the gate; there are a couple of horses and a leader harnessed to it, and the driver, a small round man, has dressed himself in a yellow coat, with large black buttons, and a white hat decorated with a breadth of black cloth, and a nosegay in his button-hole. He has even ornamented his whip with some tri-coloured silk, and would appear to be labouring under the impression that the whole thing is a bit of electioneering business, and that he is

to take down a body of voters at a candidate's expense.

His companion the cad is a surly-looking man with one eye. He smothers a pipe in his fist when the party come out of the gate, and wipes his sour face with a red pocket-handkerchief.

They gather about the omnibus and stare in, and then the Colonel helps Mrs. Rogers up, and she goes staggering over the straw into a corner. Mrs. Matthews follows, and then comes Miss Rebecca Hulse, whose skirts are held tightly down by her sister as she steps up. Then the sister gets in sideways, and is followed by Jenny, who leans out to give Ethel a hand. Ethel makes a dainty spring, and vanishes with a floating motion, whereat Mr. Sampson stares like a boy at a pantomime after the magical disappearance of lovely Columbine; and finally Fanny gets in with unexpected decorousness, and the female cargo is stowed.

"Any room inside?" says Jack, the

rogue, posting his good-looking face at the door-window.

"Not very much," answers Mrs. Rogers faintly, from the extremity of the omnibus. "I thought you gentlemen were to ride outside."

"There's room for one," says Ethel, pulling her dress away, and making the Miss Hulses shift uncomfortably along the seat as she opens a place between her and the door.

"The 'bus is constructed to hold sixteen, height insides and height outsides," says the sour-faced cad.

"There's seven inside now," returns Mrs. Rogers, "and the heat makes up the proper number."

This provokes a general laugh, and Jack goes away, on which Ethel smiles as though she were glad, and lets go of her dress.

The Colonel clambers on to the box, and Jack seats himself on the other side of the driver; and then up goes Mr. Morgan in full sight of the ladies, scraping his shins

and making desperate clutches ; and then up goes Mr. Hulse, receiving the heel of Mr. Morgan's boot in his eye, as a reward for being in a hurry, which makes Fanny grow hysterical with suppressed laughter, whilst Rebecca Hulse surveys her with looks of contempt and surprise. And lastly, up goes Mr. Sampson ; and it is a sight to see how his legs writhe, and how bloated his face grows with his exertions, and how first he drops his gloves, at which he looks with a miserable smile, uncertain whether to go on climbing, or descend and pick them up ; and how then the edge of the rail atop knocks his hat off, which, as it falls, is recognised by Jenny, who screams at the fun ; and how stealthily he is creeping down again, the perspiration lining his face, in order to recover the hat, when he is stopped by the cad, who says, "Get up ! get up ! I'll hand you your things when you're fixed," in a tone of voice which should, and probably does, make Mr. Sampson wish himself dead and buried.

All are settled at last ; the cad is admonished by Jack to keep away from the doorstep and sit upon the roof, and not to cast his eye about as if in search of fares : and then the small round coachman bends forward with the grace of a toy Chinaman, and flips the leader, who wakes up, and off goes the omnibus.

Some merry laughter and one or two little cries break out from the inside as the wheels turn, and Mr. Morgan on the outside says to Mat Hulse that he thinks on the whole the arrangement is not a very sociable one ; that two omnibuses would have been better than one, for then there would have been room for the gentlemen to sit with the ladies ; to which Matthew replies, " Yes, there's not much fun up here ; it's like going into the city on business."

But this view of the ride must be owing to Matthew Hulse having no eye for the picturesque. The high-road along which the omnibus rolls is low-hedged, and those who care to look can see great tracts of country


stretching to the horizon, many-coloured with the fields of ripening wheat, with dark spaces of fallow soil, with the vivid verdure of meadow-land, and the sober yellow of stubble. The stout whistling wind helps the big clouds to moderate the heat of the sun, and brings up the fresh fragrance of hay and the warm summer perfumes of the hedges. Jack lights a pipe and talks to the Colonel, who appears to enjoy the drive very much. The coachman has a good deal to say for himself, and assumes the airs of a stage-coach driver as he holds the cigar the Colonel gave him in his mouth at a sharp angle with his nose, and lets the gents see how he can drive three horses, and hold his whip, too, all with one hand. Mr. Sampson is meditative, but answers with nervous fervency of speech and manner to the occasional observations addressed to him. Mat pulls out a cigar, and asks the cad for a light. The cad partially unclothes himself to get at a halfpenny box of matches. Then Mat convulses his figure by squeezing

himself into any shelter he can find to get the matches to light. Then his cigar goes out. Then he must trouble the cad again for the matches. Then the cad hands them to him with a malevolent eye. Then his cigar goes out again, and then the cad swears, at which Mr. Morgan is shocked, and gazes sternly at the one-eyed man: and so the omnibus rolls on.

Inside there is a great deal of talking: they are all women, and they lift up their voices without any regard to the main conditions of agreeable conversation. Captain Fanny, pleased to observe the effect of certain fast words upon the Miss Hulses, chatters rather wantonly; Jenny is laughing all the time, and her laughter is largely composed of shrieks. Mrs. Rogers has pulled off her shawl, and looks as if she would like to carry out the notion of sitting in her bones. The Miss Hulses stare out of window a good deal, and appear on the whole as if they were taking a twopenny ride. Ethel is chiefly occupied in minding

that her dress is not creased, and in waiting for the omnibus to stop, that she may get out, being weary of the company.

It stops at last opposite a quaint, old-fashioned inn, that looks down the wide green lane which leads to it out of the high-road. A few white-washed cottages are grouped about, and all between them are deep leafy spaces, while over them elm trees and stately oaks rear their spreading branches. They are but a portion of the village which glimmers here and there in the shape of white-fronted houses through the trees beyond. Jack descends with alacrity, and is the first to help the ladies to alight. The Colonel is pretty active, however, for a middle-aged man, and Mr. Morgan and Mat Hulse likewise reach the earth safely, if not gracefully; but Mr. Sampson must again knock his hat off in getting over the side of the omnibus; and it is positively affecting to see his smile as he endeavours to touch the ground with one foot, clinging the while with his hands



with a tenacity that defies his foot to lower itself another inch, though his legs should go at the socket.

The ladies illustrate many forms of motion as they descend. Ethel lightly pressing Jack's arm springs cloudily from the step, and her dress fluffs up prettily to the involuntary courtesy she makes as her little feet touch the ground. Jenny comes out with a bump and a loud laugh. Fan jumps and is saved from falling by the Colonel. The Misses Hulse creep out with the slowness of spiders, and as if, like spiders, they were all legs, which every spectator was there to see if he could, and which it was their mission in this world to hide. Then follows Mrs. Matthews, who hops off the step with a rather gouty action, and finally Mrs. Rogers emerges, and is so long in using her legs that Jack gives her a pull.

By this time the steward and the sailor belonging to the "Egeria" have come out of the "bar," where they have been entertaining a bucolic audience with certain im-

possible narratives, and are touching their hats to the Colonel. The porch of the inn is the framework of some round faces and bow legs encased in leather, and forming picturesque ovals under canvas smocks. Other similar objects gaze here and there from over the hedges. The sour-faced cad disappears, and may be seen through a window ogling the contents of a pewter pot with his solitary eye ; and then the Colonel says, "Are the hampers all right, Simpson?"

"All right, sir," answers Simpson, a short man in a short jacket decorated with brass buttons. And he looks towards the trap in which they are stowed, and which stands horseless before the inn.

"This is Mansgate, I suppose," says Jack. "And now the question is, where shall we find a pretty spot to picnic in?"

"There's just the very place down that lane there," answers Jenny. "I know it well, and you'll all thank me for taking you there."

"We shall be happy to place ourselves

under your guidance, Miss Matthews," says the Colonel.

"Pray be careful, Jenny," calls out Mrs. Matthews. "Are you sure you know the neighbourhood?"

"There's a bit of a stream ten minutes' walk from here, gents and ladies," says a pale-faced man in a sleeved waistcoat, who proves to be the proprietor of the inn; "it's a place as I can recommend as very shady and select, and I shall be honoured by taking you there, and receiving your horders."

"He's sure to know better than you, Jenny," exclaims Mrs. Matthews.

"There's only one thing," says the landlord, glancing at the trap. "We shan't be able to get that there vehicle to the place. He'll have to be unloaded and the 'ampers wheeled on barrers."

"If you'll lend us a couple o' barrers, we'll soon manage that business, old gentleman," says Simpson.

So Simpson and his mate stay behind to

pack the "barrers" and follow as soon as they are ready: and the landlord walks towards the lane which Jenny previously indicated, and the picnickians go after him.

"This is enjoyment," says Mr. Morgan in a deep voice, removing his wideawake and wiping his forehead. The heavy trees sway overhead to the wind, and open brief spaces for the sunshine, which falls in long lances of light upon the brown soil of the lane. Here and there great gaps in the hedgerows display a dense overgrowth of tangled bush, and the silence that reigns among these unexplored shades and wild deep spaces of savage shrubbery is made profound, and in some measure weird, by the noise of the wind roaring among the high trees.

The party furnish a pretty detail to the scene as they move slowly forward, heralded by Sleeves as Jenny calls the landlord. Already they have broken up and fallen into twos and threes: Mat Hulse is along-

side of Jenny, with whom he seems rather prepared to fall in love; the Colonel and the two elderly ladies walk together; Mr. Morgan divides the Misses Hulse, whilst Mr. Simpson talks nervously to Fanny, and Jack and Ethel bring up the rear. The differently coloured dresses of the ladies catching here and there the sunlight that flickers down, make a very pretty show, with the rich and green and abundant scene of leaves and the living pillars of trees. The landlord struts in modest loneliness ahead, and the rest wind after him, throwing the sound of girlish laughter in among the silence behind the hedges, and waking more practical echoes with the sound of masculine voices.

Before long they come to a gate, and the landlord says, in reply to the Colonel's question, that the spot he's taking them to isn't five minutes' walk now. They are in a great meadow with a majestic sweep downhill. All around them for miles and miles is a rich and smiling country. The sun

would be broiling here but for the wind, which has full freedom and rushes past whistling glad sounds as it flies. Now they see the gigantic white clouds coming up heavily over the thickly-wooded distance, merged into a solid phalanx by the leagues of perspective, but parting as they come, and sailing past, one by one, to meet and merge again in the far-off South.

The party get mixed together here in a general conversation ; Mr. Morgan grows eloquent and expatiates in language that invites the attention of the two elderly ladies who get near him to listen ; and presently we find Jack with Fanny, and Ethel walking demurely by the side of Colonel Swayne.

"Shall we be able to walk a hundred yards," says Jack, "without quarelling, Captain?"

"I think not," she answers, "if you use that word so emphatically."

"I thought you were to be called Captain for the future?"

“That may be : but you pronounce it as though you had a particular right to use it—more right than anybody else.”

“Oh ! is it to be the Colonel’s peculiar privilege ?”

“A certain young lady has called you bold, and I think you are, Mr. Huntley. Tell me now, what do you presume on ? What particular merit makes you think you have a right to say what you like ?”

“Just tell me the name of the young lady who calls me bold ?”

“Certainly not.”

“Is her Christian name Fanny ?”

“If it were I would tell you.”

“The drive has excited you, hasn’t it ? I hope you have not spoken to that poor nervous Mr. Sampson yonder as you speak to me.”

“I don’t speak to others as I speak to you. Why is that, I wonder ? I meant to apologise to-day for being rude to you the other night before Colonel Swayne,

and now I would rather die than say I am sorry."

"I wish we could agree better," he says softly; "but you make me afraid of you. Is that right?"

"Why do you drop your voice? whispering is absurd in such a wind as this."

He laughs, and says, "You are not very sentimental, are you? but you are wonderfully kind-hearted, for I am certain you would never allow a man to make a fool of himself before you."

She laughs too, as she answers, "If he were honest in his folly, I don't know what I might do . . . weren't you rather angry at being obliged to ride outside?"

"No, I am never angry. I have a beautiful character. But I should have preferred an inside seat."

"I hope you properly appreciated my cousin's efforts to find you a seat."

"Ah, you noticed that! so did I."

"You don't know what that action

means in a girl whose heart would break if her dress were creased."

"I am deeply grateful: but Mrs. Rogers objected to me, you remember. Had I been the Colonel, I suppose *you* would have made room; and would Mrs. Rogers have objected, do you think?"

"I don't care a fig for your sarcasms, Mr. Huntley, and so you may praise or abuse Colonel Swayne as heartily as you please, and couple his name with mine. I can only promise you that had you been the Prince of Wales I would not have made room to oblige you."

"Not for the Prince! not for the owner of three fine feathers?"

"How childish you are?" she exclaims with a pout. "I suppose you think because I am a girl, that you may talk any nonsense to me that comes into your head."

He looks at her handsome face, swallows the compliment he is on the verge of paying her, and says,

"This wind is intoxicating. I should like to run a race. I feel in abominably good spirits."

"You were surly enough the other night."

"Well, I was. I was cynical. I was thinking bad things."

"Of me?"

"Yes, of you."

"What now?"

"Oh, it was about money and marriage, and honest love with a trifle to live on, and venerable sentiment and heaps of spare cash."

"What a fine flow of language you are master of! Pray what had I to do with venerable sentiment and spare cash, and the rest of it?"

"I am in huge spirits, Captain, and don't intend to recall anything to disturb me . . . Oh, here we are, at last. Have we quarrelled?"

She laughs and leaves him to join Jenny. They have come to another gate, have

passed it, and have halted on the threshold of a forest.

"We have still a short distance to go to reach the river's side," says the Colonel, standing in the midst of the party like the Vicar of Wakefield among his children; "unless, indeed, the ladies would rather picnic here."

"Oh, let us go to the river," exclaims Fanny.

"I hope there are no snakes about," observes Ethel, and she pulls up her dress with a sweet shudder, and Mr. Sampson beholds her feet and ankles, and grows internally and suddenly delirious.

"Shall I go on, ladies and gents?" says the landlord.

"Yes, go on," say several voices, and the landlord pushes through the trees, and in a few minutes they are on the bank of a stream, congratulating each other on the termination of their walk, and looking about them at the beauties of the secluded

spot with an admiration that is in no one instance counterfeited.

The stream is narrow and shallow ; its water purely transparent, and it gurgles past the rushy banks, and fills and soothes the ear with its soft refreshing bubbling. There is an open not far away on the other side, and there the sunshine lies in a broad and brilliant glare, and an effect of indescribable beauty is produced by the reflection of this space of vivid light diffused through the gloom of the trees which stand thickly around. One would think that all the birds in the country have come to these trees to sing : for quite a storm of whistling rushes through the densely-draped boughs in strong elusive bursts.

"This will do, ladies and gents, I hope," says the landlord.

"Nothing could be better," exclaims Mr. Morgan.

"Beautiful," murmurs Rebecca Hulse.

"If I had a gun I'd silence that row overhead," says Mat.

"I hope the grass is dry," exclaims Ethel; and Mr. Sampson falls upon all fours to feel, and says, "Quite dry, quite dry."

"We're much obliged to you for bringing us to this place," says the Colonel, addressing the landlord; "you can go now, and tell my men to come along with their barrows, and also——" and here he talks apart with the landlord, who presently walks nimbly away.

"We should have brought camp-stools with us," says Ethel.

"What for?" cries Fanny. "Isn't the grass soft enough for you?"

And she fluffs prettily down, and Jenny imitates her.

"The barrows ought to have come with us," says Jack; "that would have saved us from waiting."

"There's plenty of time, Johnny," exclaims Mrs. Matthews. "My dear Mrs. Rogers, where will you sit?"

"If I could only see a stump of a tree,"

answers Mrs. Rogers, looking round. "The grass is almost too low for me to reach."

"We'll have the barrows here soon," says the Colonel; "and they'll make good seats."

And in about ten minutes' time they arrive, severally wheeled by the steward, whose features look indistinct in the red haze of heat that envelopes them, and by the sailor, whose trowsers are so very flowing, and whose throat and chest are so very much exposed, and who presents altogether such an overwhelming nautical figure, that you may tell at a glance he is only a fine weather sailor.

"He ought to salute his Captain," says Jack to Fanny, the Colonel standing by.

"Not until his Captain has taken command, and then he will," replies the Colonel with a smile. "Mrs. Rogers" (by the way he is distinctively polite to that quiet lady, and is constantly referring to her), "will

you favour us with your judgment in the disposal of the cloth and plates?"

"Oh, pray don't ask me, Colonel Swayne; I have no idea how these things are managed."

"Why, we must behave like Turks and sit on the ground," cries Jenny. "May I help to unpack, please? there are some fruit-tarts somewhere, and they mustn't be taken out upside down."

"Take care of your dress, Jenny," cries out Mrs. Matthews.

"If Mr. Sampson touches the hampers we shall get nothing to eat," whispers Ethel to Jack. "He's sure to drop everything he handles."

The little angel with the long dark feather curling over her amber hair is careful, however, to keep in the background, while some of the others tackle the baskets. She, at all events, is not going to run the risk of having her dress spoiled by anybody's clumsiness; the pretty rogue knows very well what would become of *her* day's

fun if by chance a fruit-pie *should* be handed to her upside down.

Fanny and Jenny however are more reckless, and as a little mischief ever adds flavour to enjoyment, they call upon Mr. Sampson to make himself useful, and wantonly encumber him with knives and plates and glasses, with which, when his arms are full of them, he hasn't the faintest idea what to do. Mr. Morgan journeys good-naturedly to and fro the hampers and the cloth on the grass, punning with kindly foolishness, and longing for an excuse to pull his coat off. The Colonel covers himself with straw, and is incessantly passing things to Fanny for no better reason perhaps than because the action furnishes him with repeated excuses to look at her. Jack helps the steward to lay the cloth, and the sight of the good things provided by one or the other of the party brightens up the spirits of all, and the laughter is incessant. Then it is discovered that the Colonel has furnished the entertainment with a lot of

sparkling Moselle from his yacht, with various other delicate refreshments, all wonderfully well suited to the occasion: and Mr. Sampson has supplied some good claret; and yonder comes the landlord of the inn with a basketful of soda-water and bottled beer.

At last the feast is exposed—after two small accidents; Mr. Sampson broke a sauce-tureen and bespattered his trowsers, and Matthew Hulse fell down with a roast chicken, which seemed to take to its legs when it touched the grass, and when recovered was found to have rolled into an ants' nest. Now then they have to sit down; the girls come up smiling, and Ethel performs an evolution that makes Mr. Sampson forget where he is, and keeps him staring at her for two whole minutes.

There is no head and no bottom to the table-cloth, and so they place themselves as they chose. The Colonel finds himself next to Fanny, and Jack between the Misses Hulse, and Mr. Sampson separates Mrs.

Rogers from Mrs. Matthews. For some time Mr. Morgan, overflowing with animal spirits, refuses to sit, saying that he should prefer to wait upon them ; but yields at last to a chorus that might very well be a polite imprecation, and settles himself upon the grass, repeating again and again, "This indeed is enjoyment."

The scene is now just such a one as one would like to come on unawares. There is real beauty in the faces and figures of two of the girls ; and where beauty is wanting in the others, it is compensated by a softness and delicacy of colouring won from the assemblage of costumes, and from the shadows thrown by the twinkling leaves and the bursts of sparkling sunshine which open and vanish as the wind overhead makes the long boughs dance. Pleasant is the sound of girlish laughter mingling with the gurgling of the stream and the wild, shrill, distant choruses of the birds. The popping of champagne corks is pretty incessant ; the rattling of plates and forks

is the festive undersong of the conversation that flows brightly.

The steward and the very nautical sailor do their work bravely ; the flowing trowsers twinkle in all directions, and the steward's red face is over everybody's shoulder aiming long and short-necked bottles at the glasses, which froth to the amiable discharge.

The Misses Hulse thaw and sip their wine freely, and seem to have a new sense given them, to judge by the way they laugh at any droll observation that is risked. Their brother grows rather free and easy in his manner, and praises the Colonel's wine in a very knowing way, and mumbles in Jenny's ear that he thinks the colour of her hair beautiful.

Mr. Sampson of course meets with an accident. He *will* be craning his long neck to look at Ethel, and thinking that Mat Hulse is neglecting her, he gets up to carry a bowl of salad to her ; but nervousness overcomes him, he puts the salad-bowl down and resumes his place with the jerky action

that is peculiar to people who haven't their nervous system under control, unconsciously using the bowl as a seat, and splitting it with a fine crash as he sinks on the grass. Mrs. Rogers cries out, and Mrs. Matthews backs away; Jenny grows crimson with suppressed laughter, and all the rest have to talk to each other rapidly so as to lay the account of their smiles to something else. Of course Mr. Sampson must make matters worse by apologising and officiously picking up the china and smiling absurdly at the beet-root and the lettuce, bits of which drop from him when he springs to his legs. None of the men have any pity for him. Jack thinks him an ass, and the Colonel eyes him coldly, as though he considers there is a deal of bad breeding in these stupid accidents.

At last the eating comes to an end: Mr. Morgan says grace, over which Mat shocks his sisters by breaking into a laugh, having reference to a remark that was made some time before by Jack, the humour of which

inopportunately strikes him; and Fanny calls out, "What shall we do now?"

"A little stroll would be very pleasant, wouldn't it?" says Ethel.

"Let's try and find the source of this Nile," says Jack, pointing to the stream.

"Take care you don't lose your way, Fanny," cries Mrs. Rogers: "if you are going to walk, you had best all keep together."

"What a treat!" whispers Ethel, who is somehow close enough to Jack for him to hear her.

Meanwhile Fanny has moved slowly away; the trees in the direction she takes stand pretty close together, and lovely effects are created in the shady distance by beams of sunlight striking here and there down upon the sward, and shimmering in hazy silver columns. The Colonel looks after Fanny wistfully, but his courtesy seems puzzled to know whether to follow her or to keep with the two elder ladies, who evidently mean to stop where they are.


"Is not he blind to take no notice of his Captain's invitation?" says Ethel in a low voice to Jack.

Fanny stops and turns to see who follows. She looks strikingly handsome in the cathedral shadows of the noble trees, and her fine figure could have no better background than the wonderful perspective of knotted trunks and dreamy gloom and trembling sunlight.

"Miss Rogers must not walk alone; there may be beggars about," says Jack, in a voice everybody can hear; and he goes after her.

Ethel bites her lips quickly; but in a moment the smile is out again on her face, and she looks towards the Colonel as though she desires his companionship.

"If you propose to stop here, I'll keep you company, Mrs. Rogers," exclaims Mr. Morgan; and he casts himself upon the grass, and by doing so relieves the Colonel of the demand which the unprotected state of the two ladies makes upon his politeness.



"Come along, Becky!" calls out Mat Hulse; "pull up your dress, my dear, and mind what you tread on," and with a rather wild laugh he flounders after Jack and Fanny, who are walking composedly forward and vanishing from time to time among the trees. They are not quarrelling. Jack exclaimed when he joined her, "Miss Saunders said your starting off was an invitation to the Colonel. I don't choose to think so."

"Thanks for your good opinion. My starting off was an invitation to all of you. Sweet-looking people don't always put sweet constructions on one's conduct, do they?"

"Perhaps she is jealous of the Colonel's admiration for you."

"I have no reason to suppose that he admires me. Perhaps Ethel's kind remark about me was meant as a hint to you to stop with her."

"Indeed, Miss Saunders cares about as much for my company as for poor hulking

Mr. Sampson's. Those yellow-haired girls are never in earnest. Sincere women have dark eyes—eyes like yours."

She colours a little and smiles. It is the first compliment he has paid her which she hasn't protested against.

"Oh, here comes that fellow Hulse," mutters Jack, looking behind him. "Hasn't he taken enough wine to send him asleep?"

"I say, Miss Rogers," bawls Mat, striking against the trees as he flounders forwards, "if you want to be alone walk off to the right, and I'll stop here, and when the others come up I'll tell them you've gone on ahead."

"I don't wish to be alone, thank you," she answers, a little indignantly, though she smiles in spite of herself at his flushed face and the queer way he has put his hat on.

"Oh, I beg pardon," he says. "I thought it was a case of spooning. No offence. Only when *I* do this sort of thing I don't like to be in a crowd."

And he winks at Jack, who scarcely knows whether to kick him or laugh. Fanny's face is a fine scarlet, I promise you.

"I wish I had a gun," says the idiot, turning his wine-flushed face up; "I reckon a charge of small-shot would bring a good deal down from among those leaves, though I can't see anything to shoot at: I say, wasn't the Colonel's fizz good?"

Jack moves as though he would walk on. But Fan holds her ground, and waits for the others to arrive. Mat's impertinence has frightened her. Jack grows angry when he finds the stroll he has hoped to take with Fan nipped in the bud by the floundering donkey who has followed them, and yet somehow he is not so utterly displeased with Mat's freedom. Fan keeps her eyes indignantly fixed downwards, and the blush burns in her face. Mat stumbles forward with his face upturned, the songs of the birds appearing to fascinate him.

"He has taken too much of the Colonel's champagne," says Jack. "We can't hold

him responsible for his words. Why are we stopping?"

"I am waiting for the others."

"Are you angry to be thought spooning with me?"

"I was not spooning with you. I don't like the word. It's low."

"Shall we show our good sense by extracting wisdom from that boy's rudeness, and turning to the right?"

"Certainly not," she answers.

"If you are angry, why shouldn't I be?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Perhaps I find a delightful compliment in the young boor's candour."

"Oh, pray don't refer to him. He has made me feel as if I could die for shame."

"All because he thought we were spooning," cries Jack, warmly. "Yet you don't feel the shame of any hints that I or anybody else may drop about Colonel Swayne's admiration of you."

She gives him a quick flashing look and walks towards the others, who have stopped


in a body and admire the scenery. Jack scowls at the figure of Mat butting the trees and tripping over their roots, but bursts into a laugh when he sees the fellow go sprawling full length over something in the grass which his foot has caught, and get up again with the brim of his hat broken.

Ethel peeps at Fan and wonders what the red roses on her cheeks mean. Have Jack and she been quarrelling? The Colonel looks very glad when she joins them. If he is in love with her, his love is wonderfully free from jealousy. When Mat falls down Jenny laughs, and Becky Hulse says to her sister, "What is the matter with Matthew?"

"He was praising your champagne just now, Colonel Swayne," exclaims Fanny, which remark the Misses Hulse accept as a diabolical innuendo, and look scorn and hate at Fan for making it. The Colonel draws close to Fan and converses with her in a gentle voice. He says he hopes they'll be able to get a cruise in a day or two. He

supposes she hasn't seen her flag yet? No, she hasn't been down to the harbour since he was kind enough to hoist the flag. Then he tells her that he is very much enjoying this outing, and speaks of the Brittlebanks and Brighton, choosing commonplace topics of this kind, but involuntarily transforming his lightest words into a vehicle for the courteous admiration and tender reverence which her presence seems to inspire in him. Her manner is very different from what it was when with Jack. The Colonel's high-bred treatment of her creates a sense of imperative necessity on her part to justify it; her voice is subdued, her language careful, and she adapts herself to the tone and character of his speech and bearing in a way that enchants him as an illustration of the wonderfully plastic quality of her nature.

Jack joins Ethel, cutting out poor Mr. Sampson with an ease and coolness that makes that nervous gentleman envy and detest him. Becky Hulse and good-natured Jenny walk off after Mat: so Mr. Sampson



has somebody to flirt with if he cares about that recreation in the person of the other Miss Hulse, but his soul is with the bewitching vision with the gold hair and divine eyes, and the few words he lets fall over the precipice of his shirt-collar on the ears of Miss Hulse, are so constrained, so idle, so hopelessly uninteresting, that the poor girl is quite to be excused for presently suggesting that they should turn back.

"Certainly, if you wish it," says the Colonel, who is perfectly happy, talking with Fanny, but who accepts the expression of any woman's wish as a law for him to obey.

Fan stops at once and seems quite ready to return. Jack also shows an ungallant alacrity. Ethel alone says they have had no walk as yet—why are they in such a hurry to go back?

"There's not much fun in walking among trees," says Fan. "They are pleasant to look at, but not to bump up against."

"You were the first to set us the example

to walk, Captain," observes Ethel, with her pretty laugh.

"But Miss Hulse is tired," says Fan.

"No, not tired, Miss Rogers; but I don't think the walking here is very nice."

"Perhaps Mr. Huntley will kindly accompany those ladies who wish to continue the walk, and I will escort the others back," says the Colonel.

"Didn't one of your men bring a fiddle, Colonel Swayne?" says Jack, evading the point. "If so we might have a dance."

"Oh, that'll be capital!" cries Ethel.

"I am sure!" exclaims Mr. Sampson with many contortions of face and spasmodic action of arms, "I shall be most happy—most happy indeed—aw—to offer my escort if Miss—aw—Miss Saunders is desirous of prolonging—aw—her walk."

"Thank you, Mr. Sampson, I think dancing will be pleasanter than walking if Colonel Swayne will be so kind as to let his man play," Ethel answers, and poor Mr. Sampson feels rewarded by her smile for the enor-

mous effort it cost him to put his wishes into words.

"We had better call to the others if we are going back," says Fanny.

"Hi!" bawls Mr. Sampson, and Jack waves his hat and Fan her parasol. The two girls in advance look around, and Mat shouts out, "What are you hi-ing about?" There is no entering into explanations at that distance, and so they wait until Jenny and the other two return, which takes some time, for Mat is still under the invisible influence of the branches, and walks with his face upturned, and tumbles against the trees, and pauses after every blow to recover himself. He looks sternly at Jack as he approaches with an unsteady gait, but unfortunately the broken brim of his hat detracts from the severity of his gaze, and on the whole makes him look extremely foolish and dissipated.

"He's a little bit screwed," whispers Jenny to Fan; "he's been talking awful nonsense, and wanted to go on his knees

to me, but found that he couldn't kneel without falling headlong. Becky Hulse is dreadfully ashamed. Don't call attention to him."

"I say, Colonel Swayne," calls out the wretched youth, "I didn't tell you that I thought your fizz was first-class, did I?"

Fanny thinks he means phiz, and she bursts into a laugh.

"Matthew, will you hold your tongue?" shrieks out Rebecca; "I declare, if you say another word, I'll go straight home."

"What am I saying that you correct me like this before people?" he bawls. "Can't you leave a fellow alone?" And he walks excitedly and rapidly ahead, pulling off his broken hat and clapping it on again, and shooting up against trees, and floundering onwards in a style ridiculous enough.

"Something of this kind occasionally happens at picnics," says the Colonel in a low voice to Fanny; "but we must make the best of it for his poor sisters' sake."

"I hope he won't ask me to dance,"

answers Fanny, who does not share the Colonel's sympathy for the prim sisters. "He's a rude little donkey, and I am sorry he was invited."

Mrs. Rogers and Mrs. Matthews are sitting together on a wheelbarrow when the party return, and Mr. Morgan lies at their feet, whilst the sailor and the steward are still busy in packing the hampers.

"You are back again very soon," exclaims Mrs. Rogers.

"We are going to try if we can't have a dance," answers the Colonel. "But there's no room here: we shall have to go to that open space yonder."

"Under shelter, if you please," lisps Ethel. "A dance in the sun would be dreadful."

"There's room enough there," says Jack, pointing to a spot some hundred yards off where the trees are thin.

"Out with your fiddle, William," cries the Colonel. "And Simpson, wheel the

barrows over there ; they'll serve us for seats."

"Bring something to drink with you," observes Mat, who is leaning against a tree. "It'll be thirsty work dancing, Simpson."

Simpson grins ; the two elder ladies stare and hustle each other, and look their dreadful suspicion, the others take no notice. William, proud of coming to the front, pulls out his fiddle in green baize from one of the hampers, and falls to tuning it, at which Mat approaches and stares at his working fingers, with his hat on one side.

"Take one of those baskets with you, William, to sit on whilst you play," says the Colonel.

And then they all walk over to the open bit of ground, Simpson wheeling a barrow, and Mrs. Rogers and Mrs. Matthews keeping well among the others, being afraid of Mat, who skulks near the hampers, and shows no disposition to leave them.

The ground on which they assemble is pretty level, but a round dance is not very

possible upon it. William, on the basket, asks what he is to play, and is told to strike up a quadrille. He looks puzzled, and Fan asks him if he knows "A life on the ocean wave?" Of course he does, and strikes up. The tune does well for the opening figure, and those who mean to dance form a square. The Colonel leads Fanny forward, and Jack and Ethel face them. Mr. Sampson stands up with Becky Hulse, and Mr. Morgan with Jenny. The fiddle squeaks: off go the Colonel and Fanny and Jack and Ethel, and a very good figure they cut. Jack slides about in proper evening party style, the Colonel ambles with a very dignified motion, Fan is seen to great perfection, giving her hand like a queen, her splendid head thrown back, a fine colour on her cheeks, and laughter and fire in her eyes; and Ethel floats over the green, self-conscious, indeed, as so much beauty cannot fail to be, and her feather waves as she goes, and little melodious laughs break from her red lips,

and the sun, whose beams fall with a sharp slant, and make their shadows as long as maypoles, glorifies her hair with the transparency of amber and the scintillation of light. Mr. Sampson can't talk for looking, Mr. Morgan is struck, and smiles upon her musingly, and Jenny watches her narrowly to see how she manages to make her movements so graceful. Then the others repeat the figure, and Jenny bounces and forgets the hints of Ethel's deportment in the delights of frisking, and Miss Hulse comes forward and retires as if she were pulled to and fro on rink skates, and Mr. Morgan sprawls with his legs and dances with immense seriousness, and Mr. Sampson moves as though his shirt-collar began at his waist.

There is no flirtation ; the vis-à-vis talk to each other, and Mr. Sampson attends to the fiddler, with a view to stopping him when the figure is over. Then, when the figure is over, they all cry with one voice "Stop !" and Fan suggests another popu-

lar tune, and so they get through the quadrille. Then Mat comes rolling forward and asks if there is room for him. Mr. Morgan addresses him gravely, but Mat bursts from him with a wild laugh, crying, "I know you! this isn't Sunday, old fellow!" and goes up to Jenny and says, "Come along, there's room for a gallop. William, play a gallop." The fiddler, with a grin, obeys orders, and Mrs. Matthews starts from the wheelbarrow to stop the dance, but giddy Miss Jenny rather affects Mat even in liquor, and can't forget the compliment he paid her hair, and the fine nonsense he stammered out when she went after him with Becky, and away they go, she shrieking out to the others to join, and Mat losing his hat with the second wild whirl.

Fan laughs loudly at this grotesque performance, and receives another contemptuous stare from Mat's sisters: then Jack asks her to give him a gallop, and Mr. Sampson stalks up to Ethel, and the Colonel, who

has a fine sense of the ridiculous and would not dance a gallop for a thousand pounds, stands near Mrs. Rogers, while Mr. Morgan claps his hands and encourages the dancers into quicker movements.

If Fan looked well as she walked the decorous measure of the quadrille, she looks irresistible now as she sweeps through the gallop step on Jack's shoulder. Her dress trails its white length behind her and wreathes a tender grace around her flying figure as she sweeps past the trees: her shaggy hair catches the red rays of sunlight and flashes revelations of wonderful beauty on those who watch her; there is perfect dignity in her attitude, and she slips over the ground (impracticable to heavy feet, as Mr. Sampson soon finds out) like a fawn. Jack looks a handsome fellow alongside of her; his figure is a fine one, and he dances in a style that amply vindicates Jenny's eulogium of his powers in that line. Thanks to Mr. Sampson, Ethel makes a quite unimportant feature in the scene. He

overwhelms her, so to speak, and hides her by his clumsiness. His great legs fly out like Parson Adams's in pursuit of a horse : the tails of his coat stiffen to the energy of his movements ; his head alone is immovable in his rigid collars, every other part of him writhes and twists, and even his eyes protrude with his exertions.

Still, the whole *coup-d'œil* is a charming one. The fiddler makes a picturesque object, and scrapes out his quick measures pretty musically and in excellent time ; the steward stands near him looking on with a broad smile ; the moving branches shake long rays of light upon the dancers, and all around are the great trees slowly massing themselves into dense subdued masses of green as the sun sinks lower and lower, and the shadows creep out of the ground.

It is half past eight when the party consult their watches and talk of walking. The fiddler's arm aches, and he is not sorry to hide his fiddle in the baize. He and the steward fill the barrows with the lightened

baskets and start for the village, and the rest follow slowly, some of them tired enough with the dancing, but all of them laughing and chatting and protesting that they have spent a very pleasant day. Mat's tremendous exertions as a dancer have taken some of his excitement out of him, and he keeps by Jenny, who appears very well pleased with the attention he pays her.

Ethel is very merry. Suggestively droll perhaps, in the sense of inspiring others with merriment, she cannot be: but she laughs blithely when anything worthy of a laugh is uttered, and is so diffusive in her manner, so general in her conversation, that Mr. Morgan thinks her the very embodiment of amiability. But she is an awful little politician. She is merry because she is wretched. She talks to everybody because she would give a year of her life to limit her conversation and society to one only. She has seen Jack pay Fanny attention that no art of hers can invite; he has

quitted her for Fanny : he has looked at Fanny and whispered his admiration of Fanny when he has been dancing with Ethel. And for these reasons she is as merry as a marriage-bell, and her sweet smile shines on all who look at her lovely face, and Mr. Sampson is so much in love with her that he grows clumsier and clumsier with every step, and ends in falling over the exposed root of a tree, and covering himself with shame and disgrace.

Fanny too is radiant, but honestly so. You can see her happiness and enjoyment in her eyes, and the full and generous flush of pleasure makes her magnanimous ; she looks at kind and serene Colonel Swayne walking on in front with mammy, and says to Jack : " How I wish he would fall in love with Ethel ! I am sure he has a most tender and amiable heart, and I know Ethel's character well enough to feel sure that they would get on wonderfully well together." At which Jack laughs and agrees with her.

How glorious is the full scene of the

summer's evening surveyed from the wide fields ! the whole party stop to admire. All the western horizon is a blaze of fluctuating fire : the hills in the south are pink in the wonderful light ; the eastern sky is a deep blue with big tremulous stars throbbing in it : and the tints of the cornfields and the green meadows and the stubbled soil are solemn and beautiful with the indefinable softness and delicacy and melancholy of the gathering evening shadows.

A crowd has gathered before the inn to see the gentlefolks get into the omnibus and drive away. Some genuine rustics, pure emanations of the haystacks and hedgerows, help the coachman and the one-eyed conductor to harness the horses. William the sailor and Simpson pack their two-wheeled trap and salute the company, and make off, not however, before Jack has gone up to them and thanked them each for their services, and given them five shillings to buy ale with on the road home.

There is much pleasant laughter and talk among them all as they stand near the omnibus waiting to seat themselves.

"What do you want to get inside for, Becky?" says Mat. "You'll be much jollier on the roof. I'll give you a leg up."

And the imbecile, who is almost sober again, grins in Jenny's face. The hint is not lost.

"If you'll ride outside, Miss Hulse, I'll keep you company," says Jenny.

"It would be delicious on the top," exclaims Fan. "I don't mind trying to climb up if somebody will go first and help me."

"Nonsense!" cries Mrs. Rogers: "it's quite out of the question."

And Mrs. Matthews says, "I'm surprised, Jenny, that you should make such a silly of yourself."

"But ladies ride on the top of drags, and often sat outside in the coaching days," reasons Mat, audaciously.

"I've got a pair of steps as'll soon git the ladies up," observes the landlord of the inn,

who hangs about the party with officious smiles and bows, "if so be they've a mind to mount."

"Bring 'em along!" cries Mat, "bring 'em along!"

A violent discussion follows: Mrs. Rogers declares they will look like a party of servants out for a holiday if the girls ride outside. Mrs. Matthews says she won't go so far as that, but she thinks the girls will be acting very imprudently in attempting to climb those heights; then the younger Miss Hulse, who has been gazing at the coachman with a fixed pale blue eye, comes round, and says in a ghastly whisper that the driver's intoxicated; but they are all reassured by Jack stepping to the horses and holding a dialogue with the man, which enables him (the man) to prove himself as sober as need be, even in the opinion of Mrs. Rogers, who is always willing to believe the very worst of a man of humble quality, in that way.

The landlord comes out with the steps,

and plants them close to the omnibus : and steadies them on one side while the single-eyed conductor holds them on the other. The top reaches the roof of the omnibus, and Jack goes up, and says, " Miss Matthews, shall I help you ?"

" I'll stand close under," cries Mat ; " so if you fall, Miss Matthews, you'll strike something soft."

Mr. Morgan, in his eagerness to have his little joke, whispers to Rebecca that Mr. Hulse must mean his head ; then blushes scarlet on discovering that it is to Mat's sister he has addressed his worn-out conceit, while Rebecca turns away, and thinks that Mr. Morgan cannot certainly have been born a gentleman, although he follows a genteel profession.

Jenny is deaf to mamma's entreaties, and ascends courageously, and when she is on the roof shrieks out with joy, and all the assembled villagers grin to a man at her spirits.

" Oh, Captain Fanny, do come up !" she screams. " It's beautiful up here."

And Jack looks down the ladder with an insinuating smile, and says, "It's perfectly safe."

Fan mounts briskly, helped by Jack, and then Ethel is asked to ascend, but she sweetly shakes her head, and says she prefers stopping with auntie. Rebecca Hulse, dared and defied by Mat, puts one foot on the steps, and then jumps off; then tries again, then declares that she can't: upon which the sour-faced cad loses patience, and mutters very audibly that he's blowed if they won't be all night gettin' home if they go on at that rate.

At last it comes to this: the rest of the ladies get inside, and Mr. Sampson and Mr. Morgan get inside, too; the Colonel mounts to the place he occupied in the drive down; the sour-faced man sings out, "All right, Bill!" the villagers grin, the landlord bows, and off goes the omnibus.

Perhaps Ethel feels that there is no particular occasion for her to seem unusually cheerful now. She sits near the door, and

looks through the window in it at the lovely evening scenes which pass by, and her face is very still and unsmiling. Mr. Sampson is separated from her by Rebecca Hulse, and the second Miss Hulse faces her, so she can enjoy her thoughts without interruption. To tell the truth, all are a little too tired to chat freely; and even Mr. Morgan sinks presently, and his mind centres itself in efforts to keep himself awake. Laughter comes ringing down from the roof at times, and Ethel pictures things which are not happening; and bitter jealousy steals out of her little heart into her face, and is mercifully hidden from the eyes of those around by the gathering shadows of the night.

There is a little flirtation going on outside, but not in the passionate form that Ethel's jealous fancy images. Mat, freed from the constraining gaze of his sisters and the two older ladies, grotesquely abandons himself to Jenny, and makes her laugh with hoarse whispers, into which he

slips compliments of a very unequivocal character, none of which are displeasing to Jenny. The other two are wonderfully quiet : now and again Fan addresses the Colonel, and he turns round and joins in the conversation, and after a bit faces about again. Jack draws away as far as he can from Jenny and her admirer, that he may hear Fanny, and talk to her ; his reserved manner towards the Colonel has quite left him ; he speaks to him in an easy, almost cordial tone, and even gives him some whispered praise behind his back, at which Fan smiles, though when he asks her why she smiles she will not tell him.

The moon is behind them : a half-shape, indeed, but very clear and beautiful. The crimson lives long in the west, and the exquisite coolness of the summer eve is on the air, and moistens the land, and makes it aromatic. The wind has fallen, the clouds have passed, and the heavens are unrolled from horizon to horizon—a dome of deep blue, frosted with stars.

When the lights of Havenstown speckle the gloom in the distance, and the keen relish of the sea-air may be tasted, the Colonel turns in his seat, and says, "If this calm holds through the night, the sea will be smooth in the morning; and but a very little wind will give me an excuse for sending to you, Miss Rogers, to-morrow, to ask you to come for a cruise."

"I hope there will be a breeze; I am looking forward to the trip," she answers.

"I shall have much pleasure in seeing you on board also, Mr. Huntley."

"You are very good, Colonel Swayne. You are offering me a real treat."

"Does he know where to find you?" whispers Fan; and she blushes as she asks the question.

Jack takes out a card, writes his address, and gives it to the Colonel, who hands him his card in exchange. All is cordiality and kind feeling.

"Are we to drive to where we started from?" calls out the sour-faced man: and in

a few minutes they have turned the bend of the road, and can see the lights in Mrs. Rogers's cottage windows shining among the trees.

So here they are back again after their merry excursion. And now the omnibus stops, and the ladies on top must get down. Mrs. Rogers whips out eagerly from the inside, and is followed by Mrs. Matthews, both of them having been devoured with anxiety for the last ten minutes to know how their girls will manage to descend. Ethel floats from the dark interior into the soft moonlight, and stands looking on ; and Mr. Sampson's great legs come out, and are immediately succeeded by the Misses Hulse, and then Mr. Morgan staggers into the road, having been awakened by the stoppage from a sound sleep.

"How *ever* are you going to get down?" cries out Mrs. Rogers to Fanny.

"If you'll leave me to manage," says Jack, "we'll all reach the earth safely enough."

And, watched rather breathlessly by the two mammas, he swings himself in a very elegant manner over the side of the omnibus, and stands upon the hinder wheel; and then he calls to the cad, and orders him to stand upon the nave of the same wheel; and then he requests Mr. Sampson to get upon the small wheel, and stretch out his hand for the ladies to take as they come down; and, finally, requests the Colonel to be so good as to receive the ladies as they spring off the cad's arm. The fact is, he and the cad form a ladder, and Mr. Sampson's arm a banister, and the Colonel a mattress. Fan sees exactly how she can manage, though she has to bite her lip to prevent herself from exploding with laughter at the spectacle of Mr. Sampson jammed hard against the wheel, and clinging frantically with one hand, and extending the other, as though he were petitioning heaven to come to his rescue; and she makes quite a little transformation scene

of the omnibus as she steps over the edge of it on to Jack, and then on to the cad, and then jumps, a large, divine cloud of muslin, slap into the Colonel's arms. The care Jack took in helping her down was something wonderful. But he is not quite so ceremonious with Jenny. She is very frisky and troublesome. She behaves like a spoilt beauty, but is no beauty at all, and Mr. Sampson sees this, and groans out that he can't hold on much longer.

"Over with you!" cries Jack; and mamma shrieks, and Jenny shrieks, and Mat bawls from the top, "I've got your dress behind; you can't fall!" and then down she comes, making the cad rap out an oath as she grasps his head, forcing Mr. Sampson to slide towards her, so as to impress a fine semi-circle of dirt from the upper limb of the wheel upon his waistcoat, and plumping upon the Colonel with such an outrageous bang as to cause him to stagger breathless a yard back.

Mrs. Rogers asks them all to step in ;

but Mrs. Matthews says that she wants to get home, and the Colonel explains that he has some letters to write, and Mr. Morgan has an appointment at the rectory, and the rest, who would have accepted Mrs. Rogers's invitation, thank her and decline.

"I will call to-morrow, Miss Rogers," says the Colonel, "or send one of my men, if there is a chance of getting out to sea."

And then they shake hands, and all around farewells are exchanged.

"You should have ridden with us outside, Miss Saunders," Jack says, as he bids Ethel good-bye. "You would have enjoyed the drive."

"I hadn't the courage to mount the ladder," she answers, with a soft laugh. No tone of pique, no hint of anger or jealousy, is in her voice or face as she answers him. She raises her pretty eyes in the moonlight, and Jack thinks her beautiful, and looks his thoughts. But when he has pressed her hand and said good-night he goes back to Fan, perhaps to repeat his

farewell ; and then he and the Colonel, and the rest of the party, walk slowly towards the town, chatting gaily as they go.

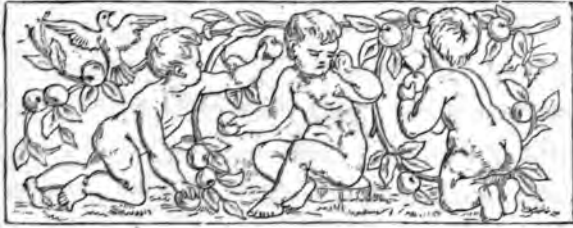
Not much passes between Ethel and Fanny that night concerning the picnic. Nothing in Ethel's remarks and smiles but conveys the idea that she has thoroughly enjoyed herself. She speaks of the Colonel as a charming gentlemen ; she laughs over Mr. Sampson's nervousness : she envies Fan's audacity in climbing on to the top of the omnibus.

"You are in luck, dear," she says. "You have two lovers. I wonder which is the sincerer of the two ? But I really believe Mr. Huntley has lost all the heart that belongs to him to you."

"I hope he has," answers Fanny ; "for I'm in love with him myself. I really am, Ethel. He is a glorious fellow !"

And she blushes up with the impulse that compels this avowal, and Ethel smiles approvingly upon her. And then—for they

have been talking, candle in hand, at Fan's bedroom door—they kiss each other, and Ethel goes to her room, and sits down, and takes her face in her hands, and sobs oddly, with dry eyes.



CHAPTER II.

ON BOARD THE "EGERIA."

EAN sleeps well all night, and has pleasant dreams. When she wakes and finds it is morning, the first thing she does is to run to the window and stare at the trees. They sway softly, and incline to the east. There is a breeze then ; and see, how tender is the blue of the sky, and pearly the small, high, ribbed clouds that stretch in horse-shoe shape overhead ! She will command her ship to-day, surely ; and she begins to dress, singing as she moves about the room.

It is eight o'clock ; and whilst Fan stands loosening her hair before the window, a knock falls on the door, and Charlotte comes in with a note.

"For you, miss," says the girl ; "and is there any answer, if you please ?"

Fan opens the letter eagerly, and reads :—

"DEAR MISS ROGERS,

"I have been looking for a breeze since seven, and it has come at last : a light wind, indeed, but strong enough to waft us out of the harbour. Will it suit you and Miss Saunders to be on the break-water by ten, when a boat will be in readiness to bring you on board ? My compliments and regards to Mrs. Rogers. Why will she not join us ? The sea resembles glass.

"Faithfully yours,

"GEORGE SWAYNE."

"Say yes—certainly—by all means," ex-

claims Fan. "Who is the messenger? Is he a sailor?"

"Yes, miss. A proper kind of sailor; the cleanest I ever saw."

"Tell him to give my kind regards to Colonel Swayne, and say that Miss Saunders, and I will be punctual. Don't keep the man waiting."

And whilst Charlotte flounders downstairs, Fan attacks her hair violently, and then rushes into Ethel's room.

"Get up! get up! you lazy thing!" she cries. "Here's a letter from Colonel Swayne, asking us to be on board by ten. There's a breeze, and the sea is like glass. Don't miss this chance, now. We shall have fine fun."

Ethel looks rather languid. She has been awake some time. The curtains are drawn apart and the blinds are up, so Fan can't fail to notice the heaviness in her cousin's eyes, and the rather wan hue of her complexion. Ethel takes her watch from the pocket at the head of the bed, and says, meditatively—

"It's eight o'clock. I suppose there'll be time to dress?"

"Only a good hour and a half, that's all," exclaims Fan. "Come, out with you. I want to see how you look in your uniform. Can I help you? Is there anything I can get you?"

The fact is she is in Ethel's power; for should Ethel refuse to get up, then Fan must stop at home. She has half a mind to say that Jack will be of the party, but stops herself, thinking she had best pretend not to know of that arrangement. Indeed, the fear that the Colonel may forget to send to Jack's lodgings (our friend, you are to know, has left the hotel, and is now at No. 1, Albion Terrace) changes her mood suddenly; and she says, with but very little haste left in her voice, "Don't be long, dear. We mustn't keep the Colonel waiting," and goes out of the room.

She is in the parlour when mamma descends, and the good lady stares to see her dressed in her yachting costume.

"Very pretty, indeed," she cries, with an approving nod; "but why have you put it on?"

"Because I am going on board the 'Egeria' at ten with Ethel. Here's the Colonel's note, received three-quarters of an hour ago."

And she hands the missive to Mrs. Rogers, who puts on her spectacles to read it, and looks pleased when she comes to her name.

"It's a fine day," she says, casting her eyes through the window; "but you must promise me faithfully to be home early."

"Why won't you come?"

"I couldn't. Don't ask me."

"Well, let's have breakfast," exclaims Fan. "It's nine o'clock. I hope Ethel won't keep me waiting."

She has got over her little fear about Jack, having settled it in her mind that the Colonel is much too gentlemanly to neglect to send to him; and is now a little feverish again, and rings the bell smartly for Char-

lotte to bring breakfast, and then runs upstairs to see after Ethel. Mamma follows her to the door with her eyes, and thinks she never saw Fan's figure to greater advantage. Certainly the girl couldn't have chosen a more becoming wear than the short-skirted serge-dress and tight-fitting body and the gilt buttons. The blue gives a fineness to her complexion and a richer depth to the dark eyes : for a wonder, too, she has done her hair differently from the style in which she usually dresses it: she has braided a length of it and it falls down her back below her waist; and somehow that plait gives an air of complete fulness to her figure, and illustrates moreover a special grace in her, I mean the "dip" in her back, which is a merit sculptors are careful to give to their marble goddesses, but which is rather rare in flesh and blood divinities.

She finds Ethel nearly dressed and beseeches her to make haste. The exertion of dressing has made Ethel a little less languid-looking ; but there is a palpable

want of life in her smile which might make one cross with her for attempting to smile, and she moves about very quietly, and her lips are pale. She "dears" her cousin with very wistful sweetness: and one can't but think her amiability charming, to see the additional quickness she imparts to the motion of her hands (though, by the way, her toilet is not ended the sooner for this) when Fan begs her to look sharp.

It is a quarter-past nine when they go downstairs. Mamma calls Ethel charming, and says those yachting dresses are really very becoming, and picks up Fan's skirt and holds it close to her eyes and pronounces the serge good. She doesn't seem to notice any change in Ethel's manner: she is a little excited over the prospect of the cruise her daughter is about to make, and fluctuates between doubts of the weather and the mild triumph she can't but feel to think the rich owner of the splendid yacht Fan is going to sail in, is Fan's warm admirer. They have just ten minutes to accomplish

the walk in when they quit the house. Mrs. Rogers parts with them nervously and exhorts Fanny to *make* the Colonel return before dark, and calls the same thing out twice from the doorstep whilst the girls go down the garden.

It is very hot and dusty in the road, and Fan longs to throw the shawl which mamma commanded her to take, over the hedge—"Just as if Colonel Swayne won't give us wraps enough to suffocate a whole family in if we're cold." They have little to say to each other as they walk. Fan's impatience keeps her a yard in advance of Ethel, who would not hurry herself to save Queen Victoria from waiting.

The sea in the distance is a pale space of unruffled silver: "So much the better," says Ethel in answer to Fan; "I wouldn't dream of going if it were rough, for I shouldn't like Colonel Swayne to see me sea-sick." Whereat Fan bursts into a laugh, for an odd fancy strikes her: suppose she and Jack and Ethel are all sick—all prostrate

upon their backs, groaning to be set on shore! She figures Jack trying to make love and breaking off to cram his handkerchief into his mouth. Those tall young fellows who dance smoothly and are called good-looking by girls don't always make the best of sailors.

When they reach the harbour they see the "Egeria" with her mainsail hoisted and a jib run half-way up the stay. There is just air enough to send a languid ripple through the breadth of white canvas and to open the flags at the vessel's mast-heads, one of which is blue, a triangle in shape, with a yellow burgee; and the other white, centred with a violet cross. This is the first time Captain Fanny has seen her flag, and she stops with a little exclamation, and her heart throbs ninety to the minute. It is a pretty compliment and so she laughs, and a suggestive one and so her pulse breaks into a brief gallop.

"There is the boat," says Ethel, pointing to the breakwater: she is a little

flushed herself with the excitement of that flag.

"I wonder if people ask what that flag means?" Fan exclaims, and as she walks she keeps her eyes upon it, and looks as pleased as a child with a new toy.

There is a boat against the breakwater and four men in her, and a little white flag with a violet cross on a small staff at her stern. Ethel suddenly exclaims—

"There's Mr. Huntley talking to the Colonel. He must be going too, then?" And Fan sees the two men talking together where the boat is. The blood comes into her face, her eyes fire up, and she quickens her pace. The Colonel sees them coming, and advances to meet them, and is followed a few steps by Jack, who has the good taste to leave him the honour and pleasure of receiving the girls. The Colonel has habited himself in rather nautical clothes; there are brass buttons on his blue cloth coat, he wears a cloth cap with a naval peak to it, which becomes him; this he holds in his

hand whilst he salutes the ladies, and then Jack comes forward and in a moment they are all talking together and walking towards the boat.

“Oh, Colonel Swayne,” says Fan, “I am so much obliged to you for that flag: it’s very pretty.” And then she notices the flag on the gig and exclaims, “Another one! you have had two made!”

“The Captain’s gig ought always to carry the colours the ship sails under,” he answers. Then he gets into the boat and helps the ladies in, and seats them on velvet cushions. Jack finds a seat and one of the men shoves off, the oars dip in a measured stroke and away they go. The Colonel places the white-cotton yoke-lines in Fanny’s lap and asks her to steer.

“With pleasure: I can steer capitally,” and she becomes engrossed in keeping the boat’s head straight for the yacht, but is not too absorbed not to notice that Jack watches her and even to meet his eyes with a smile in her own at times.

"Steer for the left side of the yacht, Captain," says the Colonel: and in a few moments they are under the vessel's stern. "In oars!" and as they glide alongside the gangway ladder, Jack says, "Upon my word, Miss Rogers, you steer splendidly," and Fan stands up blushing and as proud as a girl should be who is having honour done her.

The captain of the yacht, a smart-looking fellow with a gold band round his cap, stands at the gangway to receive the party. The masts tower a prodigious height when viewed from the boat, and Fan's flag flutters its soft milk-white folds against the blue, and resembles, even with the violet cross upon it, one of the small pearly clouds that spread in pale semi-circles over the sea.

"Can you manage to mount those steps, Miss Rogers?" the Colonel asks. "If not, we'll have a chair slung over for you."

Fan looks at the ladder—four or five handsomely-carved steps hanging perpen-

dicularly down from the yacht's side—and says, “I’ll try;” whereupon the Colonel places the man-ropes in her hand, and she jumps, and gains the deck and is saluted by the captain. “Well done!” cries the Colonel, and gives the ropes to timid Ethel, who is helped up by Jack.

“Captain Stead,” says the Colonel to the man in the brass-bound cap, “this lady is our skipper,” and he bows to Fanny. “Any orders she gives, you will obey. That is her flag up there, and whilst it remains hoisted you will know who your commander is.”

Stead touches his hat gravely, and looks at Fan, whose face is rich with blushes and smiles, and says,

“Shall we cast off, miss?”

“Oh, Colonel Swayne,” she cries, “don’t make me look foolish. I don’t understand what your captain means.”

Ethel looks very much amused, and watches Jack. The Colonel, with a gay laugh, says—

"Stead shall take us out of harbour then, Captain ; and when we are clear, you shall have command," and they all walk to the little awning spread aft under which are several comfortable arm-chairs. They can see what a fine yacht the "Egeria" is now they are on board of her. Her decks are spotlessly white : the little capstan forward is of brass, and dazzles the eye with the lustre of the sunshine upon it ; her skylights are mahogany-coloured, richly carved, and the glass protected by fine brass bars. It is a sight to look up the height of slender masts, and see the great breadth of mainsail, not yet set, rippling slowly to the soft summer breeze. There are a good many hands, and they look smart enough with their white shoes and blue shirts, red-lettered "Egeria."

The exquisite neatness of everything is a characteristic that delights the girls ; the ropes are flemish-coiled, the belaying-pins are of brass, the tiller is a wonderful bit of carving—a snake, and the scales are a real

stroke of art : there is a handsome brass-pillar binnacle ; so much brass, indeed, is everywhere, that the vessel is resplendent with it, and as she slowly swings under the light pressure of her mainsails, glories are kindled in all directions, and the eye is dazzled by brilliant flashes which leap and vanish.

“Cast that warp off, forward there!” sings out the captain, and the fellows in the boat alongside row away to the buoy, and let go the great rope that moors the vessel’s bows ; and the men forward haul it in quietly, hand over fist. Then the boat rows away astern, and lets go a rope attached to another buoy, and then up goes the big jib, rattling along the wire stay as it mounts.

“Aft here, and set the mainsail !” sings out the captain, and goes to the tiller, while the men come tumbling to where the ladies are sitting. Fan, deeply interested, stands up to watch the great space of canvas stretched clean and tight.

"We're moving!" cries Ethel. The Colonel smiles, and hands her a binocular glass, which she directs at the people watching them from the pier. These people stare hard, and Jack says,

"I dare say they're wondering what that white flag, with the cross upon it, means."

"They'll think we belong to some religious order," says Fan.

"They will not mistake you and Miss Saunders for nuns, surely," remarks the Colonel.

"Nor you for a priest; though mightn't Mr. Huntley pass for something saintly a long way off?" says Fan.

"If I thought you and Miss Saunders wouldn't object, I'd light a cigar so as to obviate all chance of conveying any false impressions," says Jack.

"Oh, pray smoke: don't mind us," exclaims Fan. "I would smoke myself, if I wasn't afraid of public opinion."

"Since you don't object, I *will* light a cigar," says Jack; and he offers his case

to the Colonel, who, however, is too old a stager to smoke any cigars but his own, so he puts Jack's case aside, and makes him take a Havannah, the like of which Jack hasn't seen for many years.

The yacht is now under full sail : but the breeze is very light, scarcely enough to keep the canvas steady, and they glide past the pier almost imperceptibly. What wind there is, is from the westward, which will pretty nearly enable them to hold their course from the harbour's mouth straight to that point of visionary blue yonder on the horizon.

"We shall feel the breeze when we get further out," says the Colonel ; "and if the glass is a true prophet, I think we may hope to see some foam under our bows presently."

The people come walking quickly to the end of the pier to see the yacht sail out. Things absolutely familiar from the dry land take a certain aspect of novelty ; the town has a clean picturesque appearance,

its red roofs backed up by the hill, and the white cliffs standing massively under the bordering of white houses with green balconies and shining windows; the water in the harbour reflects the black-hulled coal brigs, the fishing smacks festooned with nets, the flag-staff opposite the consul's office with a Dutch flag flapping lazily; the long line of pier, and the embankment, the reflection of which fluctuates curiously among the lines of ripples that softly chase each other against it.

The yacht is steered close under the pier, and the people look down on her, and doubtless envy the two men the luxury of the arm-chairs and the companionship of the charming girls. But when the "Egeria" has her forefoot on the sea, she feels the tide, and in a moment or two she is beyond the pier, and opening up the stretch of yellow sands and greenly-topped cliffs, and the loveliness of a far-off prospect of low-lying shore to the eastwards.

"One could sail round the world in a

vessel of this kind, couldn't one?" Fan says.

"I shouldn't object—though I am not quite sure about the Pacific off Cape Horn, from what I have heard," answers the Colonel.

"She is built more for speed than for anything else, isn't she?" remarks Jack, running his eye knowingly about, but in reality knowing nothing about it.

"Yes, but she is a capital sea-boat. I have had her in the Bay of Biscay, in a gale, and carried a whole jib and a double-reefed mainsail and passed big ships hove to. Not many would believe this, but it is true. She is the dryest boat I was ever in: and I think would outlive a tornado by reducing her canvas and keeping her head to sea—Eh, Stead?"

"Hear, hear, sir!"

"Aren't we rocking a little?" lisps Ethel, and she holds on to the back of Fan's chair and looks at the water with round blue eyes.

"We're in shallow water and feel the ground-swell: we shall soon be out of it. I hope the motion doesn't inconvenience you, Miss Saunders?"

"Oh no, not yet, thank you, Colonel Swayne."

"I shall go first," says Jack. "I'm a bad sailor."

"I'll not give you up until I see you throw your cigar away and grow angry if you're asked a civil question," exclaims Fan with a laugh. "That's a sure sign, isn't it, Colonel Swayne?"

"An infallible sign. I have laughed when crossing the Channel in one of the steamers from Boulogne to Folkestone, to see some maritime individual, dressed in this fashion," he looks down at his buttons, "come on board and get upon the bridge and pull out a big cigar and talk with a fine nautical air to the captain, before the steamer starts, you know — about the weather and the crossing and such matters. I have kept my eye on him after we have

left the harbour and seen him furtively cast his cigar away, as though he had dropped it by accident, and grow thoughtful, and then leave the paddle-box, and snarl at the steward for asking him for orders, and back away from the engine-room and eventually stretch himself on his back with his head anywhere. Buttons are no preservative, Miss Rogers; and even an acquaintance with the names of ropes and sails won't prevent the roll of a vessel from taking effect."

"This is smoother now," says Ethel. "I rather hope we shan't roll. I don't think I shall like it."

"Human nature has two weaknesses," observes Jack, enjoying his cigar like a man: "it never likes to be told that it snores, and it never likes to be thought sea-sick. As both are beyond our control, why should we be ashamed of them?"

"Look at those people fishing!" cries Fan, and she goes to the side of the yacht to stare at a little boat with three men

and a woman in her, all whom have been for the last ten minutes in the utmost alarm, being sure that the yacht doesn't see them, and that it will run them down.

"Any sport?" calls out Jack.

A rather green-faced man holds up an eel at arm's length. "That's all," he answers, and lets the eel fall and turns his head away. The boat is soon astern with the tide rippling under her. It is pretty to see the pier dwindling and the coast growing longer and longer. Wonderful effects of colour are submitted by the long line of cliff, for here and there dark shadows lie under projections of it, and in some parts it falls into ravines or gorges filled with a gloom that throws the whiteness of the chalk on either side into brilliant relief, and furnishes incomparable contrasts for the indescribable azure of the sea. The country beyond is clearly seen, verdant and sunny, with hills shining like silver away upon the sky. There is a large ship with all sail set standing down Channel on the

yacht's port beam : she has soldiers on board, as you can tell by the cluster of red spots on her forecastle. Her canvas towers nobly, and distance makes the outline of the spars exquisitely fine. Right ahead are some dozen of vessels at anchor, waiting for the wind. They are small black points on the horizon, and the smoke from a steamer, whose funnel is sunk below the water-line, rises perpendicularly behind them and stains the pure sky with a slowly moving drab-coloured cloud. The morning sun right overhead makes a resplendent mirror of the sea, and the yacht, softly impelled by the sweet clear air, glides slowly forwards, causing the water to gurgle under her stern.

The Colonel invites his guests to step below and look at the yacht's fittings. They all descend the companion-ladder and find themselves in a charming apartment flooded with sunshine from the spacious skylight overhead. The mainmast, that comes through the deck and sinks out of

sight under foot, is painted white, chased with gold, and the Colonel points with justifiable pride to a good bit of oil-painting done on the mast, representing the nymph Egeria disconsolately weeping herself into a fountain. There are guns for wild-fowl shooting, suspended in a row from the deck, and pleasant lounges all round a square table, which possesses the ingenious property of remaining level, let the vessel roll as it will ; there is a good-sized book-case with pleasant reading on its shelves, and a fire-place, which makes Fan understand the use of the copper funnel that comes through the deck just abaft the mainmast. The Colonel shows his guests the cabins, each with its polished mahogany bunk and chest of drawers and immovable washstand ; and the bath-room ; and the pantry with its pleasant furniture of glass and crockery ; and the kitchen with its compact range ; and they get a glimpse of the forecastle beyond, with its simple row of bunks and a couple of the men sitting

smoking under the fore-scuttle, the light through which falls upon them, while all around is a soft obscurity.

"This is much better than a house," exclaims Fan. "How charming to have one's bedroom and bathroom and sitting-room and kitchen and attic all on one floor."

"Everything is very beautiful," says Ethel. "I was never on a yacht before ; I think I should like to live in one altogether,—that is, if it was always summer."

Jack can't but envy, though he admires too. He knocks his head against a beam, and Fan raises a laugh by telling him to be careful not to injure the ceiling. The steward, who waited on them at the picnic, follows them with wine and biscuits ; they go into the dining-room, as Fan calls the saloon cabin, and sit down to nibble a biscuit before returning on deck. The cushioned lounges are delightfully springy and soft ; Fan looks about her with pleased

childish curiosity, and goes to the bookcase and cries out—

"Oh, Ethel, here are a heap of novels! What a happy man you ought to be, Colonel Swayne!"

"We're leaning over a little, aren't we?" exclaims Ethel.

"Not half as much as I should like," answers the Colonel, removing his eyes from Fan, at whom he is incessantly looking. "But we shall feel the breeze more the further we get out."

Jack is getting into an unsatisfactory state of mind. The donkey is comparing his condition of life with the Colonel's, and growing morbid, as such useless comparisons are apt to make a man. He, too, watches Fanny with sly vigilance. Surely she must lose her heart to this yacht. She can't resist the affection of a man possessed of so much wealth and splendour as the Colonel. Wasn't she rather coquettish in the way in which she went to the bookcase and called out that remark about the Colo-

nel being happy ? Nothing that Jack's eye rests upon but would keep him in gloves for a year. He has come out to enjoy himself, and is going to be jealous. Ethel sits silently by his side. Which of the two has a heart in her ? the idiot wonders ; and he drinks his wine and pulls down his mustache and looks at the Colonel looking at Fan, and then has a peep at Ethel, and wishes to heaven *he* had a yacht, for he would hoist a flag to the little blonde just to pique Fan.

They regain the deck presently and return to the shelter of the awning. The Colonel calls to one of the men, who brings a large telescope mounted on a stand, and places it before Fanny. She points it shorewards, and bursts into various exclamations of wonder and delight, declaring that she can see a horse and cart in the road there, and there's a cottage with a man digging in front of the door, and then she removes her eye in order to inspect the distant prospect, and compare the

power of the glass with the objects magnified, and utters fresh exclamations, all with such sweetness of laughter and artless enjoyment of the wonder, that the Colonel is fascinated, and Jack sees that if ever a fellow were in love the owner of the "Egeria" is. The simpleton must pay Fanny off for provoking this admiration, so he takes another telescope that lies on the skylight and adjusts it for Ethel, and pushes his chair close to hers, so that she can rest the glass on his arm, which he extends for that purpose. The wistful blue eyes look up at him filled with gratitude. How soft and gentle the charming little creature's manners are! it were worth while to oblige her if only to see her smile her thanks. The most delicious absurdity in the world is the contrast of her sweet face with the fell word "Defiance" gold-lettered on her hat.

"Please don't let me tire you, Mr. Huntley," she says, and gently puts the telescope aside.

Jack looks at the Colonel, who has gone to the side of the yacht with Fanny, and is pointing in the direction of Deal.

"I hadn't the least idea that we should meet you on board," Ethel goes on. "Did Fanny know you were coming?"

"Oh, yes; Colonel Swayne was good enough to invite me as we rode home last night."

"Is not this a beautiful vessel?"

"Very. Doesn't it go straight home to your heart, Miss Saunders? Doesn't it make the Colonel an irresistibly handsome young man?"

"Why are you so satirical? I am not in love with Colonel Swayne, and he is not in love with me."

"Well, that shows bad taste on his part, surely."

"Not at all. It merely shows that he has made his choice, and that I am not the chosen one."

"If you were his choice what would you do?"

"He is very kind and amiable, but he's not a man to fall in love with, is he?" and the little thing wrinkles her nose so saucily that Jack breaks into a laugh, whereat Fanny glances around.

"I don't know about that. Doesn't Captain Fanny look as if she were in love with him?"

He must be mad to ask that question, for only last night he answered it himself, and was quite sure. But the wretch is jealous, and suffers abominably, for what torment is more dreadful than jealousy? and is in the temper to believe that black is blue.

"I don't think," says Ethel, gravely, "that a girl like Fanny could ever *really* love a man so much older than she is; but you see, poor child, that her mamma is not rich, and therefore naturally desires her daughter to marry somebody with money."

"And don't you think the poor child agrees with her mammy?"

Ethel laughs under her breath and looks down and says, "I am afraid she does."

But you mustn't expect girls to be romantic now-a-days. Those who are so are mercilessly ridiculed by their own sex, aren't they? Romance isn't fashionable. Girls want good positions, lots of money to spend on dress, and beautiful yachts like this to sail about in."

"Are these your tastes?"

"No," she answers quickly, letting her pensive melting eyes rest on his. And by the time she has turned her head aside with a little flush on her cheeks, Jack has seen an expression that makes him keep his gaze upon her, and which sets him thinking of what Jenny told him that day when Ethel and Fanny called after the regatta lunch.

"We shall go about presently!" exclaims the Colonel, turning and addressing them. "Our Captain here," he indicates Fanny with a smile, "wishes to sail close to the land."

"I want to get among those ships in the Downs there," says Fan, and she leaves the yacht's side, and seats herself.

"I should like to see that big ship out yonder close," says Ethel, looking towards the vessel on the port beam. "I wonder where she is going!"

"To India most likely with troops, miss," answers Stead who is steering.

This reply makes the girls stare at her with great curiosity.

"Let's go to her and see the soldiers!" exclaims Fan.

"She has more wind than we have, sir," says Stead to the Colonel. "I think it'll be better to stretch out a bit. We shall be calmed further in."

"Up with your helm, then," replies the Colonel, and the yacht's bowsprit makes a short sweep and the ship comes round to the port bow. The yacht steadies, and the water slips by them in bubbles.

"I wonder if I could steer," says Fanny.

"Pray try," answers the Colonel. "Stead, give the Captain the tiller."

Stead grins as Fan puts her hand on the huge wooden snake, and says, "Keep her

as she is, miss. If you want her to go to the right, push the tiller over to the left, and vicey varcey."

"Watch the sails, too, Captain," exclaims the Colonel, standing beside her, "and see that they are kept full. And you must peep at the compass now and then, so as to remark that she holds her course."

"What is her course?" asks Fan.

"Why, just now it is south-west and by west half west."

"What a heap of words! Is she going straight?" and Stead answers, "Quite right, miss," and the men forward laugh as they watch the helmsman, and whisper among themselves that she's a splendid-looking girl, and that the governor seems rather sweet in that quarter.

The breeze freshens now: the lines of ripples on the water, in which the sunlight trembles, are edged with foam; the wake astern broadens and lengthens, and a line of bubbles skirts each side of the oily-looking narrow breadth of water, which the hull of

the yacht smooths in her progress. They can judge their speed by a big white and black buoy which they pass, and which is slightly inclined by the current that helps them forward. They are to leeward of the ship and propose to round her under her stern and pass her to windward, or else, says the Colonel, "She'll take the wind out of our sails, and pass us as often as we try to pass her."

Slowly they open more coast scenery stretching to the eastward of Havenstown. The light shines broadly upon the white cliffs, and they rest upon the horizon like a delicate white cloud seamed here and there with shadow. The houses in Havenstown are by this time merged in an indistinguishable mass, and the pier is a faint outline, with the smoke of the harbour tug going up lazily alongside of it. Meanwhile, on the starboard side of the yacht, the land bordering the sea has grown defined: it stretches in an arid waste of sand, backed by trees, and a green hilly landscape glow-

ing in the morning light. Further on is Deal, gradually opening its level front and shortening its skeleton pier as the yacht heads out; and beyond, the South Foreland looms high and dark, the broad tracts of green on its summit cut sheer at its edge, and a line of grey beach running like a tongue from its base.

“We are catching her up!” cries Fan with her eyes fixed on the ship ahead; and Ethel goes to the yacht’s side, and looks at the great black hull and towering stately volume of canvas, passing slowly along the small ribbed clouds in the far-off sky beyond.

The Colonel’s prophecy is likely to prove right; for the breeze is freshening now, and there is a quick leap of foam at the yacht’s bows; the big sails are full and round, the flags stream bravely from the mast-heads, and the water on the lee-side rushes past, and looks close enough to be touched by the hand.

The sense of swift motion over this

smooth sea is glorious : Fan steering, in an especial degree realizes the delight of it, for the vessel is marvellously obedient to the smallest pressure of her hand, and the enjoyment and triumph of absolute control imparts an extraordinary zest to the pleasure of the swift bubbling progress.

"This is as good as a race," says Jack, growing excited. They can see a crowd of soldiers on the forecastle of the ship and the heads of many dotting the line of bulwark, and the man at the wheel sometimes turning his face on his shoulder to look at them, and some men walking to and fro the poop. That should be the pilot in a tall hat holding on to a backstay and looking up at the mountain of canvas.

"Steady !" cries Stead to Fan. "Keep her just as she is !"

The huge hull of the ship comes close, and Ethel and Jack cross the deck to look at her. They can read "Monmouth" painted in white on her stern, and see her copper gleaming in the pure water, and hear

the clank of her wheel-chains. Her great sails strike the girls with admiration and wonder; she has a fore-topmast stunsail set, and this increases the astonishing effect of her breadth of canvas. A man in the maintop takes off his cap and waves it, and the crew of the "Egeria" return the greeting with a like salutation. The red-coats come pouring over to the ship's side as the yacht passes close to windward.

"Recruits," says the Colonel. "They're going round the Cape. Thirty years ago I made the same journey in much such a vessel."

Some officers on the poop level opera-glasses at the girls, and the Colonel calls out—

"Where are you bound to?"

A man, probably one of the mates, shouts back, "Madras!"

"Can we take any message ashore?"

"Nothing, thanks. We shall bring up in the Downs."

"How many troops do you carry?"

"Two hundred and forty."

"God speed you! prosperous voyage!"

The soldiers cheer, Fan lets go the tiller in her excitement (it is instantly seized by Stead) to wave her handkerchief; Ethel imitates her, and a row of handkerchiefs flutter along the poop of the ship; the yacht draws rapidly ahead, and they see the great bows of the vessel chipping the water into a spout at the stem, and turning it into a sheer brilliant fall. At this moment she is majestic; her huge jibs are full, her vast spaces of canvas swell into the heavens; the slight heel of her hull adds beauty to her whole outline, and the red coats on the forecastle are a finishing detail to a spectacle of picturesque grandeur. Stead puts the yacht's helm over, runs across the ship's bows, and heads straight for Deal. This bringing her close increases the yacht's speed, and in a few minutes the troop-ship is a long distance astern.



CHAPTER III.

IN THE DOWNS.

EAL looks wonderfully pretty from the sea ; the long pier comes out in a straight line from the level esplanade, and the shingle up which the transparent breakers roll is white and makes a fine foreground for the colours behind. The South Foreland rises grandly and near, and the cliffs thereabouts offer a gloomy, scarred and iron front which the gay morning light only reveals without softening. The high pearly clouds have blown away up Channel, and bigger clouds

come sailing now out of the west and blurr the water which is leaping to the freshening breeze.

The yacht is nearly abreast of Deal, inclining her masts sharply and stretching her lovely length along the water. They can see the famous Deal boats hauled high and dry on the beach : people walking on the esplanade and the pier ; signals flying on the big flag-staff, responses maybe to the troop-ship which has gone about and is lying with her head pointing to the Southern portion of the Goodwin Sands. On their left are the dozen or two of ships which look mere specks from Havenstown. Two of them are getting under weigh : the rest, evidently outward bound, are waiting for the wind to shift.

They are of all rigs and nations. Yonder is a French brig with the tricolour hoisted and some bearded faces looking over the bulwark ; further is a Dutch barque, her hull painted green, smartly rigged and clean as silver ; a long iron ship lies between

them, straining at her anchor ; she is deep laden, and has her number hoisted at the mizzenmast-head : that is, a row of flags, yellow, white, blue, red, which make her looked dressed as for a holiday.

The yacht heads for these vessels : on some the men salute her with a wave of their caps ; others stare at her sullenly ; there is a light giddy young fellow on the Frenchman with pointed mustaches, and his hat cocked, who kisses his hand elegantly to the ladies, at which Fan bursts into a laugh.

They pass under the stern of a large lumbering old-fashioned ship crowded with emigrants. Stead luffs, and brings the yacht almost alongside of her, to enable the girls to see the passengers. The emigrants have already made the ship's sides dirty with their slops and washings ; and the forecastle looks like a great laundry-ground with the strings of linen drying in the sun. Most dejected faces look over the side, and groups of men and women are squatted

forward. A woman with a shawl pinned over her head holds up her infant to see the yacht ; a crowd of children hustle each other at the gangway to see : and the main-deck creeps with moving figures. Strange whiffs of cooking come from her. As the yacht passes a man bawls : " I'll be willing to change places with ye, ladies !" at which a hoarse murmur of laughter rises, and some woman cries out shrilly.

" Round with her, Stead !" exclaims the Colonel, and the yacht heels over and sweeps round with her head pointing south-west.

" Everything isn't picturesque that looks so, Miss Rogers," the Colonel says.

" I never saw such a lot of dirty people," lisps Ethel.

" They can't help that," says Fan. " There are little children on board, and I dare say that poor creature who held her baby up to us can feel the miseries of hunger and dirt and loneliness as acutely as the genteeldest individual among our acquaintances could."

"Doesn't Captain Fanny moralize prettily, Colonel Swayne?" exclaims Ethel with her soft laugh. "She makes me feel desperately hard-hearted."

The Colonel looks gravely at Fan, but makes no answer. Jack, too, sees the wistful pensive look that comes into the girl's eyes as she watches the emigrant ship dwindling astern.

A man forward strikes two blows on a bell.

"One o'clock!" exclaims the Colonel; and with an apology to the girls for leaving them, he goes below.

Ethel walks to the big telescope, which is stationed on the weather-side of the skylight, and points it towards the land. She puts her fingers on her left eye to keep it shut, and looks a bewitching little creature in her golden hair, and saucy hat, and smart yachting costume.

Fan is on the lee-side of the deck, right aft, leaning on her folded arms, and looking at the passing water. Stead has resigned

the tiller to one of the men, whilst he eats his dinner below.

Jack goes over to Fanny.

"I hope you are enjoying this trip, Miss Rogers."

"Very much, indeed."

"I am glad it is fine for your sake. You have been looking forward to this cruise pretty anxiously, haven't you?"

"Why do you say that?" she answers, standing erect, and looking at him. "Well, it is true."

He gives a cynical laugh and glances suggestively at her flag, which streams freely from the mast-head.

"Do you remember my telling you when we first met that you had a bad temper?" she says. "I am rather vain of that discovery, for it shows real perception on my part."

"Was I bad-tempered last night?"

"No, you were very agreeable; but you are horrid now. You look at me with a scowl, and this is almost the first

time you have condescended to address me since we have been on board. You have been so much engrossed by Colonel Swayne that I have not had an opportunity of speaking to you before. But you see, the moment you are at leisure I am at your side. I hope not as an intruder?"

"Do you want me to be rude to Colonel Swayne?" she exclaims, almost angrily. "He is my host; he is doing everything in his power to make me happy. You are not so kind. You come to taunt me, and quarrel, and mistake me."

She falters over those last words, pouts and turns her head away.

"In what do I mistake you?" he says, hurriedly. "I wish I knew. I wish I could be sure. Look at that flag flying up there. What does it mean? Ought it to make me cheerful?"

Ethel keeps her hand upon her left eye but the other blue peeper levels its cerulean fires at them over the top of the telescope.

Her attitude would express her intent upon the beauties of the shore as magnified by the glass.

Fanny flushes up and laughs.

"That's just it," she says. "One does not trouble when one is sure of a thing. And what's the best way of making sure? To find out, isn't it?"

"How am I to find out?"

"What do you want to know?"

"There it is! So our ride home last night was a dead silence all the way, was it?"

"You were very agreeable, and that's all about it, Mr. Huntley. Now, please, put on a sweeter expression of face, and say something funny."

And she looks round at Ethel, who ducks her blue eye to the glass with miraculous speed.

"I am not in a funny humour," he growls. "If I were I should probably play the Colonel a trick, and pull that flag down."

"Poor, harmless little flag!" says Fanny, casting her eyes aloft. "What can there be in a piece of white calico—or whatever it is made of—and a lovely little violet cross, to make you so peevish?"

He is silent a moment, and then shrugs his shoulders.

"It is human nature," he says. "A fine yacht's a fine thing, and the owner of it is bound to be a splendid haul."

"Yawl, did you say?"

"I said haul," he answers warmly.

"There is something called a yawl. I believe it's a boat. Why didn't you mean yawl? It's just as sensible as haul."

"Do you understand the meaning of the word haul?"

"No; tell me."

"When a fisherman's net is full he calls it a good haul."

"Really! and what do people mean when they talk of their little all?"

"You surely don't want to make out that I drop my h's, Miss Rogers?"

"I should cut you if you did. But please explain your joke about the Colonel being a good haul."

"It explains itself. It's cleverer than you think; it's the living truth."

"Then I'm a fisherman, with a net, in which is the Colonel; and so I have got a good haul?"

"God forgive me for making you think I mean that!" he exclaims, with passionate emphasis.

"Oh, please don't rush into extremes. I suspect your notion is that no girl can resist the eloquence of a beautiful yacht and the wealth the owner is bound to have. Is that it? I am a girl, and the rest follows. You are a wonderfully shrewd man, Mr. Huntley."

And with a little satirical laugh, and a face made up of wilfulness and vexation, she walks over to Ethel.

The Colonel comes stooping out of the

companion hatchway, and Jack seems absorbed in admiration of the South Foreland, the bluff, heavy front of which broadly faces the yacht, whilst beyond is the extreme point of the Admiralty pier just stealing out. The breeze is felt now. It comes whistling across the wide expanse of sea into which the yacht heads when she gets the South Foreland on her beam.

The troop-ship has fetched the Downs at last, and has brought up; and the men are aloft stowing the sails, and the flag of the firm that owns her streams handsomely from the mast-head. The two vessels which were getting under weigh when the yacht passed, are now stretching away south with all their canvas set, and the blue nimble water licking their sides. A great iron screw steamer comes panting up Channel, and passes under the yacht's stern, her bows high and ugly, her masts spare and naked, and her screw half out of water splashing up a little hill of foam under her counter.

The sea is lively hereabouts with pleasure-boats hailing from Folkestone and Dover, the furthestmost houses of which are just beginning to show. A little yacht with an oval deck and a man steering in a kind of cockpit, cheekily pits herself against the "Egeria," and drops astern ridiculously. This gives the girls a fine idea of the sailing qualities of the vessel they are on board of: that oval-decked boat seems to be rushing through the water at a spanking pace, and yet in a few minutes she is so far astern that the helmsman's face is a mere blurr under the sail.

Fan walks right forward into the bows to see the stem of the yacht cut the water. The men hide their pipes, and draw back respectfully as she advances, and when she looks backwards and upwards the yacht seems rushing at her; it is the most glorious picture of sloping white deck and full towering leaning sails and flashing brass-work, and over all a blue sky frothed with clouds of pearl. Under the bows

the water parts like oil, and boils in a widening space along the lee-side ; and on the weather side there is a permanent wave, green as bottle glass, turned sheer with a purely rounded outline, and now and again flinging up a single flake of water white and brilliant with the sunshine upon it. Lines of stringy seaweed undulating ahead, glide swiftly up, and are buried by the yacht's keel.

All away on the starboard quarter are the cliffs of Dover : the town is a confusion of grouping at that distance off ; but the green lands about are very vivid, and the coast stands out white and bold, and beautifully rugged against the soft shadowy line of land that creeps far off upon the horizon.

A picture full of life and colour presently offers : one of the mail-steamers from Calais, with sloping funnels and huge hammering paddle-wheels, crosses the yacht's bows ; her decks are crowded forward, and the two vessels rush past each

other like railway trains. The steamer leaves a brief lop in the sea, and the yacht plunges a bit ; then flies the foam, and with every jump of the vessel the wind sings among the shrouds and stays like a band of music. The inconvenient motion is soon over, and presently a bell rings, and the Colonel comes to Fanny, and tells her that lunch is ready.

The yacht's cabin looks very bright and pleasant with the white cloth and shining glass and silver upon the table. The sunshine comes slanting through the skylight, and through the glass one may see the big foresail and Fanny's flag high overhead streaming its folds of white against the blue.

There are cold fowl, and a fine ham, and excellent salad on the table, and a made dish or two : there is iced claret, and champagne, and sherry, and seltzer-water in abundance. The steward waits with the grace and foreknowledge of an accomplished

butler; and the clink of glass, and the pretty laughter of the girls make a soft music to chime in with the bubbling of the water passing the vessel's side.

Jack's spirits improve, and he thanks the Colonel for the delightful day he is giving him. Ethel is rather quiet; but she does justice to the Colonel's hospitality, the fresh air having made her appetite a great deal too honest to permit conceit to flirt with it. There is a tell-tale compass fixed to the deck over the Colonel's head, and he sometimes glances at it.

The yacht was lying pretty close to the wind when they went below, with her lee portholes well under water, but when they have nearly finished lunch the vessel's list sensibly decreases, and Fan notices this by the edge of the table not lying quite so close to her chair as it did when she first sat down.

"Either the wind is hauling round to the norrard," says the Colonel, who feels himself privileged to use highly nautical

terms, "or else it is dropping. One or the other, and I shall be very sorry for either."

"Why?" Fanny asks.

"Because a north wind will oblige us to beat home, or a want of wind will oblige us to stand still."

As he says this, the companion is darkened by the interposition of a human body, and Stead's voice calls out,—

"Can I say a word to you, sir?"

"Come down, Stead, come down!" cries the Colonel; and down Stead comes with his brass-bound cap in his hand. "What now?"

"The breeze is slackening, sir."

"I was afraid so."

"The South Sand lightship bears east south-east, sir."

"Has the wind shifted?"

"No, sir."

"Then put your helm up and jibe her."

"Yes, sir."

"Keep her east until I come on deck. Have a glass of wine, Stead."

"Thank ye, sir."

He puts his cap down to take the glass, calls out, "My respects to you, ladies and gentlemen," nods amiably, tips up the glass and goes on deck again.

"What curious words you use!" exclaims Fan. "What do they all mean? What's jibe?"

"You jibe a vessel when you put her before the wind and let her main boom come over."

"You are no wiser, dear," says Ethel.

"Are we before the wind now?" asks Fan.

"We shall be in a moment or two;" and the Colonel looks through the skylight and then at the compass over his head.

"There's no danger, is there?" Ethel inquires.

"I hope there is!" cries Fan. "I should enjoy the excitement. Can't we get wrecked and cast away for half-an-hour or so; so as

to have something fine and wonderful to talk about when we get ashore?"

"I can't swim, for one," says Jack.

"Nor I," exclaims the Colonel. "I am as bad as Falstaff. But I don't think we shall be reduced to the extremity of either swimming or sinking."

The yacht is before the wind now, heading for the Downs. They jibed her after the manner described by the Colonel as the ladies came up the hatchway, and Ethel cried out and held on to the brass banister, as the great boom swung over to starboard and shook the whole vessel with the shock of its weight upon the main-sheets. The wind, following them, appears of course greatly diminished; it comes in soft summer puffs, which fill the sails for a moment and then hang slack. There is very little tide now either one way or the other, and the yacht slips slowly through the water, heading a little this side of the red-hulled lightship that lies motionless as a rock on the brilliant water.

"I was thoroughly deceived by the sky this morning," says the Colonel. "I really thought the breeze would hold all day."

"It doesn't matter; this is very delightful, isn't it?" exclaims Fan, seating herself under the awning, whilst Jack takes another cigar from the Colonel's case, and Ethel peeps through the big telescope.

"I am sorry because I had hoped to have run you a few miles down Channel and shown you some pretty scenery. However, since a calm is threatened, we had better keep near home."

The red lightship comes up slowly. A single head is visible on board: her great cable stretches its black length into the sea, and they can hear the water washing and gurgling about the rudder.

"If I had thought of it, I would have run the yacht close and flung some newspapers on board," says the Colonel. "You can't do the poor fellows a greater service. It's weary work being on board a vessel of that kind for a month at a spell."

"Mayn't they leave the ship once during the month?" says Ethel.

"I believe not."

"I suppose their wives write to them?" observes Jack.

"Who's the postman?" says Fan dryly.

"It all looks very tolerable on a summer's afternoon," exclaims the Colonel; "but you must consider, Mr. Huntley, that these men have nearly nine months of winter in the year. Imagine a pitch-dark night, a gale blowing a continuous thunder, and a sea which tosses the vessel twenty feet in the air and drops her into a boiling chasm—and let me tell you that the rolling and pitching of a vessel at anchor is very different from that of a vessel under sail—and that's not all. Figure a big ship on the sands yonder, made a terrific-looking object by the ghastly blue-lights they burn in despair, the flash of a gun giving a momentary glimpse of a network of black rigging swarming with human beings; and, over all, the roaring of the breakers on the Good-

win. The men on board the lightship see her but cannot help her. They can only fire guns for aid ; and it has happened over and over again that they have seen a ship, in broad daylight, go to pieces and strew the sea with drowning wretches, and have not had it in their power to lift a finger to save one of them. That is the part of their duty that would drive me mad. You understand, Miss Rogers, that the men are not permitted to leave the ship ; very properly of course ; for the lights have to be punctually attended to, and any neglect on the part of the men might involve the loss of a score of vessels."

"It would be rather nice," says Ethel, with a little lisp which the minx will affect on occasions ; "if one had a husband one didn't particularly care for, to get him made captain of a ship like that. He would be obliged to keep away for a month at a time then, wouldn't he ?"

The Colonel laughs out of amiability, but bits of cynicism of this kind are not always

thought clever, and Jack looks as if he hadn't heard.

The yacht swims slowly forward at little more than two or three miles an hour, and what wind there is, is dropping fast, and the sea near the land grows like polished steel. Under the awning it is cool enough, and the steward has placed a table before the girls with fruit and iced wines upon it; Jack, with his hat off and his feet on the skylight, smokes one of the Colonel's fine cigars and says anything that comes into his head, to Ethel, whilst he watches the Colonel bending over the back of Fanny's chair and telling her the names of the judges and actors and authors whose photographs fill the album on her knee.

It is hard upon four o'clock when the dead calm falls. The yacht in all this time has scarcely made four miles, and now she is in the Downs again, motionless on the slack water, with Walmer Castle right opposite and the land within hail of a speaking-trumpet.

They can hear the breakers running up and down the shingle, and through the summer hush that has fallen with this afternoon calm, sounds travel along the water so clearly that the notes of a concertina played on the emigrant-ship, a good mile off, is audible on board the yacht, with the clanking of a capstan and the voices of men singing as they hoist a boat.

The two vessels which were getting under weigh when the yacht passed the Downs some hours before are becalmed close together, some four or five miles away down in the south, and the tide, which out there is now very slowly running to the westward, swings their bows round towards the land. A soft sub-swell, scarcely perceptible, so long and regular and rhythmical is it, comes through the sea out of the east where the great Northern ocean lies, and makes the sails of the yacht flap with gentle sounds overhead, and fan little draughts of air along the warm decks.

In the further distance the coast is hazy

with the heat, but the near shore, where Deal is, is brilliant and keen in the glorious afternoon light; the picturesque castle of Walmer stands massively out upon the softly-wooded prospect, and ever and again at long intervals comes up the boom of cannon out of the bay, and a pale cloud rises sluggishly and hangs over the flat sandy land.

"We had better bring up, I think, Stead," says the Colonel.

"Yes, sir; there don't seem much chance of a breeze yet awhile," answers Stead, looking around.

"We are in no hurry," says the Colonel, addressing the others. "If the calm should hold I'll send a boat ashore to Deal and telegraph for the tug."

"How far are we from Havenstow?" asks Fanny.

"About eight miles; an hour's sail with a good breeze."

"It will be beautiful here when the sun has set," exclaims Ethel. "The sea will

be like glass, and we shall be able to see the stars without looking up."

"Oh, but Colonel Swayne," cries Fanny, "I promised mamma that we should be back before dusk."

"I will do my best," he answers, laughing. "If we are in by ten will that be too late?"

"It isn't actually dark until after nine," says Ethel.

"I'd be glad to stop here all night if it depended on me," says Fan. "I don't want to make my mother anxious, that's all."

"They're going to drop the anchor," exclaims Jack; and he pulls on his hat and walks forward. Fan grins in his face as he passes; his jealous scowl over that remark of hers about stopping there all night amuses her mightily. Ethel says she would like to see them let go the anchor, and trips after Jack.

"I am selfish enough to feel grateful for this calm," says the Colonel, taking Jack's

chair. "It furnishes me with an excuse to keep you a little while longer on board than a breeze would allow."

"I am enjoying myself very much, Colonel Swayne, and I don't mind this calm a bit so long as we get home in time to prevent mamma from growing uneasy."

"The tide will be setting towards Haventown presently, and the steamer will tow us into the harbour easily in an hour and a half. If Mrs. Rogers were with us now we could take our time."

"She was silly not to come. The trip has been delicious ; and what will it be by-and-by when the moon rises?"

And she lifts her handsome eyes and pushes back her rough hair. He looks at her in silence and with great earnestness.

"How long are you going to stop at Havenstown?" she asks, scarcely heeding his gaze, and turning over the leaves of the album without noticing the pictures.

"I cannot quite tell. It will depend on

what I must call circumstances," he answers, with a rather wistful smile.

Probably her instincts caution her not to be too inquisitive, for she goes on :

"I suppose you will sail away in your yacht when you go?"

"Yes; but I shall be quite content to remain in Havenstown."

She changes the subject.

"Has your yacht won any races?"

"Two. I have the cups in my rooms in town. I won a race at Plymouth last year, and one at Cowes the year before."

"Why aren't you racing now? Are the yacht races over?"

"Oh, dear, no."

This is his answer, and no more, and it should seem suggestive enough to her, for just a shade of embarrassment comes into her face, and she looks away towards the yacht's bows. Jack and Ethel are standing there talking. Jack stares in Fan's direction over Ethel's head. The bright brass capstan, the white jib beyond, the

shining deck, and clean, grey ropes, and the soft summer sky, and the sea-line on the starboard bow, with the glint of the glowing sky upon it, all make a happy setting for the little figure in the serge dress and coquettish hat, and Jack looks handsome enough as he leans against the curving bulwark, politely turning his head from time to time to expel the smoke, which he has not the old-fashioned humanity to forego.

“Are we at anchor?” asks Fanny.

“Yes, but the anchor fell quietly; we like to do these things without making a noise.” He hesitates a moment, and then says with a smile, “Shall we not have to congratulate Mr. Huntley and your cousin before long? They seem to have found out each other’s attractions.”

Had he struck her she could hardly turn whiter. For one quick moment she looks both amazed and frightened—all in a breath; she smiles quickly and painfully, and says with a dry throat—

"Have you found out that they are in love?"

"Oh, no, I do not say so. He is a handsome young man, and Miss Saunders is very beautiful, and nothing should seem more reasonable than that they should fall in love with each other."

She stares at him whilst she tries to think what makes him talk like this. Has he guessed that *she* is in love with Jack, and is he disingenuous enough to try to set her against Jack, and make her jealous of him? No, his face is quite candid, with its amiable smile and clear, honest eyes. She is sure that he is merely stupid for once in his life, and speaks in real blindness.

She bends her eyes upon the album, and says with a laugh—

"Why don't you suppose that Mr. Huntley is in love with me? why do you put Miss Saunders in my place?"

"I should not like to think that," he answers gently. "It is not so, is it, Captain Fanny?"

—

"It would not do for me to ask him, would it?" she says. "But I dare say Ethel would if she were in my place;" and she sends a flashing jealous look along the deck at the sweet figure that talks with Jack.

"One may be too presumptuous sometimes," says the Colonel thoughtfully. "There are some things which we may really take a liberty in hoping for. At what age should a man begin to blush on discovering that he is in love?"

Fan laughs rather wildly, and looks away towards the shore.

"We seem to be turning," says she. "I hope we shall get a wind to carry us home."

The kindly gentleman is easily suppressed. He colours a little as a man should who talks unreciprocated sentiment, and exclaims—

"I fear you will find this calm tedious, Miss Rogers. How shall we amuse ourselves?"

"Let us fish."

"If you like. There are plenty of lines on board."

Fan is delighted with her suggestion, and calls out to the others, "I am going to fish," and she begins to pull off her gloves.

Jack finds it easy to break off his chat with Ethel, and comes aft; and Ethel follows slowly, turning up her blue eyes to the sails as she advances.

The steward is called, and brings fishing-lines on squares of wood, and some bits of meat which must serve for bait until one of them hooks a fish, and then they can cut him up. Ethel thinks it's rather cruel, isn't it? the poor fish do no harm, do they? and recoils in a very genteel way from the bait; but is induced by the Colonel to try her luck, and is presently fishing with charming gravity, and with her gloves on.

"You'll spoil your gloves," says Fan.

"Better spoil your gloves than your

hands, Miss Saunders," exclaims Jack with a sour look at Fan.

The imbecile is in a bad temper. He has been watching Fanny and the Colonel, and has no longer the least doubt that she is a heartless coquette. Fan meets his acidulated glance and laughs; it pleases her as well as a soft word of love from him; of course she can read his mind, and the Colonel's notion which drove the blood out of her face, becomes innocent nonsense in the light of the jealous surliness which Jack's good looks have put on.

"Aren't you going to fish, Mr. Huntley?" she says.

"Oh, yes, I shall have much pleasure," he answers stiffly. "What is there to catch, Colonel Swayne?"

"One never knows; that's the best fun of sea-fishing," replies the Colonel, giving a line which he has been baiting to Fan.

"If you try very hard you may catch a crab, Mr. Huntley," says Fan, paying out her line artistically.

Her banter pleases Ethel, who laughs melodiously, and then the Colonel posts himself on Fan's left, and they all wait for a bite.

The tide is turning, and the yacht swings slowly. They have clewed up the main-tack and furled the foresail, and so from the deck they have a clear sight of all the sea and land around.

The afternoon sun pours its flood of splendour on the smooth sea in the south ; but the haze of heat narrows the horizon, and the further ships in the Downs loom largely, and mark their magnified spars against the whitish blue of the sky. The French vessel lowers a boat, which rows away to Deal ; and the splash of the oars is a distinct sound amid the hush that overhangs the water. They have Deal on the starboard bow presently as the yacht swings to the eastward, and they can hear the rattling of a boat being launched down the shingly incline into the sea, and the men talking as they jump into her.

The South Foreland stands solitary and grand. There is a small cluster of houses this side of it, and a black fishing-boat high and dry on the beach. The trees about Walmer look vividly green, and again and again comes up the boom of cannon out of the bay, and a white wreath rises and becomes a fixed cloud in the blue.

"I've got a bite!" shrieks out Fan excitedly.

"Don't be too quick!" exclaims the Colonel. "Don't strike until you feel the fish pulling."

"It's the lead hitting the bottom," mutters Jack. "I'm getting bites all the time."

"I tell you it was a bite! there, again!" screams Fan. "Oh, I have got something. It's pulling dreadfully! I'm sure it's a large fish. Oh, how heavy my line is!"

"Up with it!" cries the Colonel. "Smartly, Miss Rogers, or he'll be off. It may be a cod—I hope it is."

They all strain their necks to look, and

Fan pulls away with a flushed face, and presently brings to the surface a great length of seaweed. Whereupon Jack breaks out into an insolent guffaw.

"At all events it's more than you've caught," Fan cries, with a pert toss of the head at him.

"Take my line, Miss Rogers," says the Colonel; and the line with the seaweed swinging to it is handed to one of the men to clear.

Ethel, pretending to know nothing about fishing, is nevertheless artful enough to pull up her line in order to see if the bait is still on her hook, and lo! up comes a little silver pouting.

"Why, you've caught a fish!" calls out Fanny.

"So I have! How curious! I didn't feel it bite," lisps Ethel; and her dainty gloves pull up the line until the wet part comes, and then they desist.

"What a dear little fish!" exclaims Fan.

"A dish of 'em makes a good fry when they're fresh, miss," says Stead.

Jack tweaks the fish on to the deck, where it hops about and makes Ethel drag her dress away.

"How cruel to cause the death of such pretty things," she says, softly; and her sweet eyes look sadly on the fish. But the others are too anxious to get a bite themselves to heed her musings; so she asks Jack to put more bait on her hook, and begins to fish again.

Presently Jack catches a pouting. Then Fan gets a bite, and pulls up a flounder, and no better name could the fish have; for her excitement is prodigious, and she splashes with the line, and shrieks with laughter, as she whirls the flat, cold thing on board within an inch of Jack's nose. Then they bait with pouting, and the Colonel complacently hooks a codling, and simultaneously Ethel lands a dab. So here they have caught four distinct varieties

of fish in no time, and Fan is as merry over the fun as a schoolboy.

This amusement kills the afternoon very agreeably. Jack is the unlucky one. His first is his last and only fish. The rest do very well, and by-and-by the steward has threaded a score of different fish through the gills, and holds them up that the ladies may appreciate their luck.

At half-past six the first dinner-bell rings. It is still a dead calm, but the tide runs past the yacht swiftly, and promises to add a good two knots an hour to her speed when she shall start for home. The girls go below to get rid of the salt water on their hands, and the Colonel talks with Mr. Huntley and Stead.

“How long will the tug take to tow us in, Stead?”

“About an hour and a half, sir.”

“And how long will she be coming out?”

“Why, a good hour agin this tide, sir.”

"Then you had better man one of the boats, and go ashore, and send a telegram to the harbour-master, requesting him to send the tug at once. It is now half-past six. If the tug is here by eight, we shall be home by half-past nine."

Stead calls some of the men aft, and they lower away the gig and start. Fan returns on deck in time to see the pretty picture of the boat moving towards the land, with the red sunlight winking in the blades of the oars.

"If we are home by eleven it will do very well," she says, when the Colonel has explained his reason for sending Stead ashore. "I suppose it's as calm at Haventown as it is here, and I don't think mamma will be anxious."

The sun floods the western sky with a delicate red haze, and the South Foreland looks a magnificent bit of headland against the splendour—black and rugged, with its gloom reflected in the polished water at its base. The sea is pearl-coloured in the

south, but the sun flings its tints upon the far east, and makes the haze there pink, and draws out the coast-line to embellish it with a faint, ethereal lustre of crimson. On the near shore some of the houses catch the sunshine, and their windows burn like watch-fires; the hulls and spars of the ships in the Downs turn yellow; their cordage is exquisitely defined, and is an unimaginably delicate tracery, finely complicated as a web, and here and there upon the decks a piece of brasswork shines in a small clear flame.

The dinner they sit down to relishes wonderfully after the wholesome amusement of the afternoon. No wonder the Colonel lives on board his yacht when in harbour, since he goes attended with so excellent a cook.

The setting sunshine falls aslant through the skylight on the table, and transmutes the silver into gold, and sheds a soft light upon the darker corners of the cabin. The table does not swing now; they may put

their wine-glasses anywhere, and they will not capsize. The yacht is motionless, and there is something solemn in the silence that reigns outside.

Fan chats gaily, and looks sumptuous in the warm, delicate light. Her cheeks are flushed, her eyes flash proudly, her full neck is white as foam against the blue serge. Jack has met her glance, and read something in it that brings out his spirits, and a handsome, dashing young fellow the villain can appear when he chooses to be amiable.

Ethel is pensive and quiet : a little poetical fairy, with an abstracted smile and lovely swimming eyes, that go heavenward through the skylight from time to time with sweet effect. The Colonel is very courteous to her, as befits the behaviour of a gallant gentleman to a lady ; but his attention to Fanny has quite another character : full of dignified tenderness and reverential anxiety. If Jack is in love with Fanny, which there is no reason to doubt, he ought to grind his teeth to see the ex-

pression that comes into the Colonel's face when he looks at her. And perhaps he would, were it not for certain reassuring messages which Fan's dark eyes from time to time deliver.

They are flirting with the almonds and raisins, and grapes and sweet biscuits on the table, when the Colonel holds up his hand, and exclaims, "Hark!" and Fan immediately exclaims, "It's the steamer!"

They can hear the hammering of the paddles distinctly, and a moment or two after Stead puts his head through the skylight, and says, "The tug's a-coming, sir."

"All right," answers the Colonel; and he looks at his watch, and says, "You'll be home, Miss Rogers, before ten."

"May we go on deck?" she asks, and they all leave the table.

The evening is one of perfect summer beauty. The sun has gone down behind the South Foreland; and all away to the south, and extending over the lowering

headland and the line of coast stretching to the north, the sky is burning crimson, with a small group of clouds, like a flock of birds, hovering on a level with the beetle-browed promontory, their edges on fire. The wonderful light has caught the ships at anchor, and they are all red : the brass-work on the yacht's deck is blood-like in the glow, and a line of scarlet runs down each polished mast and veins the wire rigging.

In the far east the sky is a soft, deep blue ; the haze has melted upon the horizon, and the white coast, where Havens-town is, rests on the peaceful sea like a delicate cloud. In the crimson air the near shore is a wonderful picture of tender green and pale grey shingle ; the shadow as of a valley rests upon Deal, and mingles the rows of houses in soft, confused outlines ; but the long pier stretches out sharply, and is clearly reflected in the water.

Hark ! You can hear the hammering of

paddles, but it seems scarce credible that the sounds should proceed from yonder small black object, which seems miles away, and whose existence would hardly be noticed but for the pillar of smoke that goes up out of it into the pure, dark, spotless ether.

Hush, again! They are singing in the emigrant-ship. How distance sweetens the rude chorus! Yet with what exquisite clearness do the sounds float over the breathless sea!

Listen now to the bugle-call coming from that ship there. The Colonel pricks up his ears to the sound, and presently it is echoed ashore from the barracks; and strangely mellow are the floating notes, and solemn the hush that follows.

"How wonderfully beautiful!" exclaims Fanny, and her great eyes grow humid and she seems to hold her breath.

"The water is on fire in the shadow here," says Ethel, looking over the yacht's side. There are brief phosphorescent

gleams in the fluctuating current sucking the yacht's hull, but there is too much light abroad yet for these sea-fires to show their brilliance well.

Jack crosses the deck to look with Ethel, and Fanny and the Colonel remain alone near the tiller.

"There is not enough poetry written about the sea, is there, Mr. Huntley?" Ethel says. "I wish I were a great poet! I should love to describe such an evening as this in beautiful verse."

"But you write poetry, don't you?"

"Sometimes—silly little verses."

"Repeat some of them, will you?"

"Not for worlds. You would sneer."

"Indeed I would not."

"Well, I would rather you should read some."

"Is Captain Fanny a poet?"

"No, not in the least. She is always laughing at me for being romantic."

How charming she looks as she says this. One envies the bulwark for receiv-

ing the pressure of that lovely form ; her soft eyes search the deep waters and her face overhangs the darkling tide like a lily.

"Girls ought to be romantic," says Jack.

"I wish I were not," replies the little witch, with a sigh. "Romance is always idealising, and so romantic people never get what they want."

"What do you want, Miss Saunders?" asks Jack, with a smile.

She moves her tiny foot to and fro, but makes no answer.

"There is the moon beginning to brighten over the ships there. I am glad for your sake. You are fond of moonlight."

"Very," she says in a whisper. "It makes everything beautiful and holy."

"It cannot add to your beauty, though it might perhaps improve my holiness."

"Why do you speak of my beauty?" she asks, looking up at him. "You

admire Fanny, and we are so unlike each other in appearance that I can't think any compliment you pay me sincere."

"Oh, pardon me. There are many kinds of beauty. The rarest is golden-haired beauty."

She drops her head quickly, and looks at the water again. He steals a glance at Fanny; the Colonel is addressing her, and Fan stands with her eyes downcast. In the bows of the yacht the men are clustered waiting for the tug, the hammering of whose paddles grows louder and louder; a lovely twilight fills the air, the crimson haze still lives behind and over the headland and towards the south, but the east is dark, and one or two clear large stars are shining in it and strike flakes of light in the sea.

"What a long way off that tug must have been when we first heard her," says Jack. "Her paddles began to sound, I should think, as she came out of Haventown."

I dare say Ethel pouts at the water over the capricious twists the young fellow's conversation takes. They were on a pleasing subject ; he might as well have kept to it. She turns and leans with her back against the bulwarks, and Jack tries to learn how to coil a rope in regular bights over a belaying pin.

Fanny leaves the Colonel's side and goes to the stern of the yacht with her back turned upon the deck. Something in the movement causes Ethel to look at her, and she sees the Colonel clasp his hands behind him and stand with his eyes fixed upon the deck.

The shadows are gathering quickly now. The South Foreland grows blacker and blacker against the paling crimson, and the sea darkens to right and left of the moonlight whose silver lustre swims in a broad unruffled cone in the South. The houses ashore fade out in the gloom, and yellow lights spring up; and lo ! upon the frowning headland a round white star of surpas-

sing brilliancy is kindled, and buries a strange keen light in the sea under the line of shadow thrown by the cliff. Far away in the east springs up another light, yellower than the stars which shine clearly there ; and right in the moonlight is a red spark upon the water-line which flashes and goes with regular alternations. The ships in the Downs get out their riding-lamps ; they hoist a brilliant lamp on board the yacht at the foremast-head ; then the green and red lights of the steamer draw close ; the thundering of the paddle-wheels seems under the yacht's bows, and a volume of black smoke pours out and hides a wide space of gleaming stars in the sky.

Suddenly the hammering of the wheels ceases, and the roaring and hissing of rushing water are silenced. A hoarse voice comes from the tug :

“Yacht ahoy !”

“Hallo !”

“Ready with your warp ?”

"All ready."

"Man your windlass, then."

But the men run the anchor up with the capstan. The clank of the pall is full of music. The tug reverses her engines and slues round and backs stern foremost close under the yacht. The rushing of the steam that is blowing off fills the ear with an odd sense of busy life.

"Look out for the line!" sings out a voice, and a coil of thin rope dexterously falls on board, and they make fast the tow-rope to it. This is dragged on board the tug. Stead runs aft to the tiller, the paddles revolve, a rush of water seethes and boils past the yacht's sides, they can feel the strain on the tow-rope, and in a moment or two the near ships at anchor are gliding away and running their skeleton spars through the moon.

The sense of motion is strange and delightful after the long and silent repose. The air streams pleasantly and makes a delicious freshness. There is a faint day-

light still in the west, but night is settling fast on the sea, and now if Ethel looks she may behold streams of liquid fire flowing from the sides of the dark object ahead, while the star reflections broken by the motion of the vessels, mingle their white lights with the sea-fires in the wake of the yacht. The lamps of Deal shine along the shore in a twinkling line; already the ships in the Downs are visionary blotches upon the pallid western heaven; the moon increases in glory and silvers the sea beneath her and whitens the atmosphere around. The men come aft in obedience to Captain Stead's call to stow the mainsail, but the big jib flutters cloudily ahead, and Fan if she looks aloft may catch a glimpse of her flag lazily flapping to the draughts of sweet air.

The Colonel comes quietly to Ethel and addresses her. His manner is odd; he talks, but does not seem to attend to her responses, though he hears them and uses them as links to connect his commonplaces.

He is subdued, and converses as one who forces himself to speak, and finds nothing infectious in Ethel's poetical excitement over the beauty of the night.

Jack crosses to Fan, who leans over the stern of the yacht. She is so lost in thought that she does not know he is by her until he speaks, when she starts suddenly and stands upright.

"What are the wild waves saying, Captain, that you listen to them with such engrossed attention?" he exclaims.

"I am wondering that the water doesn't put the lights in it out," she answers.

"It's a sign, I have heard, either of a gale passed or a gale to come, when the water shines so vividly," he says. "Is not this beautiful? look at the moon. One thinks of the sweet scene in the 'Merchant of Venice,' and longs for a Jessica."

"There is one yonder, ready made, with bright hair and idyllic eyes. Ask her to play Jessica and you shall see how prettily she acts."

"What's the matter, Miss Rogers? what has happened?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I don't know. Perhaps the moonlight has robbed you of your spirits."

She is silent, and then says with an effort—

"Nothing has happened. You don't want me to profane this holy calm with laughter?"

"I have been telling Miss Saunders that I like romantic girls," he says. "I asked her if she were romantic, and she said yes. I asked her if you were romantic, and she said no. Is that true?"

"True of me? What is romance?"

"Oh, yearnings and longings and gushings about the True and the Ideal and the Beautiful, and a small appetite, isn't it?"

She bursts into a laugh, and the Colonel, who is talking with Ethel, looks round.

A voice comes from the tug in the darkness ahead:

"Starboard your helm. Keep the red light on the port bow."

And Stead roars out, "Starboard it is!"

"That's romantic, isn't it?" says Jack.
"Starboard your helm—perhaps to get out of the way of a buoy."

"How do you steer when you want to get out of the way of a man?" Fanny asks.

"A good answer to that question will occur to me when it's too late," answers Jack. "I can't think of anything smart now. Who's the nuisance? not Jack Huntley, I hope?"

"You must think me very ill-natured to suppose that I can drop such broad hints. Isn't Jack Huntley a young gentleman who goes through life with 'Meaning me, sir?' blazoned on his mind? I never take hints myself."

"Because you never get any."

"Be as rude as you please: I am not afraid of you."

"I intend a beautiful compliment. Ill-favoured people—people who are in the way, rude people, interfering people—those

are the folks hints were invented for. Now do you take my elegant meaning?"

But Fanny doesn't answer; she has grown suddenly thoughtful and forgotten him and herself in a reverie. The beautiful moonshine rests on her face and sweetens and etherealises her, and kindles sparks of silver in her dark eyes. The outline of her form against the glimmering western sky, still most delicately tinged with the daylight's departing glory, is wonderfully noble and full and commanding.

Jack leans his head close to hers and whispers, "Fanny."

She looks up hurriedly and exclaims breathlessly, "Oh, Mr. Huntley, I know what you are going to say. I must join the others." And she walks away, stops to look back and exclaim, "Come and talk sense," laughs slightly, and goes close to Ethel and the Colonel.

Jack bites his mustache savagely, stares at the compass, at the dark land on his left, and the Deal lights dwindling into a

small pale constellation, and then after observing Stead's dim face with supercilious attention, not being quite sure that the man isn't grinning, stalks over to the others, and folds his arms and scowls sulkily at the stars over the shore.

As the shadows deepen the furnace of the black shadowy steamer ahead glows scarlet from time to time up the engine-room upon the funnel, and sparks of fire fly out with the black smoke; the foam of the paddle-wheels shines with the phosphorous, and the undulating streams of light hiss softly round the yacht's bows, and kindle into a clearer glow as they leap away from the vessel's sides. The South Foreland light burns with a marvellous brilliancy, and when presently it is shut out by the coming forward of the cliffs, all the air in a wide circle about it is filled with the white mist of its radiance. The lights of Havenstowen begin to show clearly in the gloom ahead; they range themselves into a semicircle, and dot the heights

to right and left. The red light at the end of the pier burns small and fine, and there is not a light, not a star in the sky above, but has its counterfeit in the breathless deep.

They pass a shadow at anchor, with a pale lantern at the mast-head; this is a fishing-boat waiting for a breeze to carry her into harbour. Then presently they hear a voice trolling in jolly tones on the starboard beam, and a small open boat glides out of the gloom into the moonlight and passes quickly, and is swallowed up again in the mystery of darkness that lies outside the moon's reflection. The paddle-wheels beat a regular intonation ahead, and now and again the warp stretches and sings strangely as the power suddenly comes upon it.

The night seems to have cast its shadow on the spirits of the party. The Colonel is thoughtful and quiet, and leans over the yacht's side watching the lights of Havens-town that grow clearer and clearer. Jack

smokes in silence with his arms folded and his hat over his nose. Fan has become suddenly impatient to get home. She pulls out her watch and holds it close to her eyes to see the time by the moonlight, and says to Ethel that her mother will have given them up as lost. Ethel partakes the general mood, but more from curiosity than sympathy. "What has happened?" she thinks, and she strains her eyes at the Colonel, and then at Fanny, and then at Jack, and puzzles her little brains with questions.

The harbour clock is striking ten as they draw near the long pier, whose stones glimmer white in the moonlight. The tide is high, and the semicircle of lights, varied in colours as they shine in street lamps or as signs, strike lines of blue and yellow and green in the water. Some smacks lie motionless and black; the rigging and spars of a barque that was towed in from near the Goodwin Sands after the yacht left the harbour, rise slenderly and gracefully in

the moonshine, and the brilliant stars sweep through her shrouds as the yacht glides after the tug past the pier-head. All away on the left the land is hazy with the moonshine on it, but the bay is dark and still, and the shore that stretches towards Deal is solemn in its shadowy vagueness, and in its remote dim loneliness, strikes the eye almost as an unreal creation.

In a moment a sharp blow sounds on the tug, and the warp falls with a splash on the water. The yachtsmen fling a line to a boat that has put off from the pier, and in a few moments the graceful vessel is at rest.

"Our little trip is over," says the Colonel, standing near the gangway whilst some hands get a boat ready to land the ladies. "I am sorry the wind fell; I had hoped to give you a pleasanter run."

"I am sure we have enjoyed ourselves immensely," exclaims Ethel, effusively; and

Jack murmurs his thanks, but Fanny is silent.

The Colonel does not offer to get into the boat with them. He shakes hands and bows as they pass, one after the other, over the vessel's side, and when they are in the boat he says "Good-night," raises his hat, and walks to the cabin.

"What is the matter, Fanny?" whispers Ethel.

"How do I know?" responds Fanny, snappishly, and she stares hard at the embankment whither they are being rowed.

Ethel waits until they are on shore and out of hearing of the men before she risks any more comments. Then, as they all three walk towards the town, she says—

"Quite a change has come over the Colonel. It is rather odd that he didn't invite us to another cruise, or come with us in the boat."

If Jack has any theories he keeps them

to himself. Fan remains immovably dumb. She walks quickly, but Ethel keeps up with her now ; the fact is, it is too dark for Jack to observe that a rapid, paddling gait is unbecoming.

"You will allow me to see you home?" Jack says, on Fan's coming to a halt at the bottom of the High Street.

"Don't let us take you out of your way," she answers.

"Oh, it is no distance."

"Pray don't trouble."

"Then good-night," he answers gruffly, and pulls off his hat and walks savagely off.

"How bad-tempered Mr. Huntley is," lisps Ethel.

"I don't feel in a humour to talk with him ; I don't feel that he has a right to be with me just now. I wish something hadn't happened. It has made me wretched," and Fan almost groans as she talks.

"What has happened, dear?"

"Colonel Swayne has asked me to marry him and I have refused."

"I almost thought as much," says Ethel quickly. "Why did you refuse?"

"Why? because I don't know. Because I don't love him. I like him—yes, very, very much—he is a dear amiable fellow; but I said no, and he was so pained and so gentle in his pain that I could have bitten my tongue out for having said anything to grieve him," she cries out.

"Why didn't you ask for time, dear? With your feelings towards him it would not take you long to love him well enough to become his wife."

"I never could love him," exclaims Fan vehemently.

"What need that matter?" says Ethel coyly.

"Don't talk to me!" bursts out Fan. "I hate everything just now—I feel mad, and I don't know why!"

And she breaks into a sharp walk, and all the rest of the way Ethel is left a hundred paces behind.

"At last!" shrieks out Mrs. Rogers's voice in the hall as Fanny opens the door; and the kind, nervous lady, who has been listening a whole hour past for their steps, darts out upon them. "You have stopped away two hours longer than I expected you would! . . . Why, what have you done with Ethel? Oh, there she is!" as the little figure comes up the garden. "Where has the Colonel taken you? Have you all been to France that you're so late?"

Fan goes into the dining-room, just saying as she passes that they were caught in a calm; and sinks into an arm-chair with a great air of weariness upon her. Ethel follows with a cautious face and eyes that explore her cousin's countenance. Fan rather puzzles her.

"Well, I am glad you have got home," says Mrs. Rogers, turning up the lamp. "I've been thinking of you all day."

"I should like a cup of tea," exclaims Fan, and she rings the bell.

"How far have you been?"

"We have been moored all in the Downs," answers Ethel. "We got a glimpse of Dover, and then

"Down dropt the wind,
The wind dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be,
Though we weren't the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.'"

"It seems to have been sad. Fanny, what's the matter with you? You don't look as though you've enjoyed yourself very much."

"Oh yes, I have, mammy," replies Fan quickly. "The Colonel entertained us grandly, and Ethel never marred a single beauty of the sea or sky by so much as one poetical quotation."

"Captain Fanny has had an offer of marriage, auntie," says Ethel. "That's true news."

Mrs. Rogers stares, and Fan cries out—

"Couldn't you have kept that in for a few moments longer? What a small mind

you must have that such a trifling fact as that can burst through it so easily !”

“What’s all this ?” calls out Mrs. Rogers.

“Have you really received an offer ?”

“Yes, mammy.”

“From the Colonel ?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I declare !”

Which being said, Mrs. Rogers stares at her daughter and breathes quickly.

“And Fanny likes him very, very much,” coos Ethel, pulling her delicate little glove off her delicate little fingers.

“Very, very much—a great deal better than I liked him before,” answers Fan.

“Why, then, it’s settled !” pants Mrs. Rogers, holding her face at discretion, for she can’t make up her mind yet how to look.

“No it’s not. I refused him.”

Mrs. Rogers draws herself in, clasps her hands on her lap and says shortly, “I’m sorry.”

“Sorry !” echoes Fanny, catching up the

word sharply and turning full upon her mother. "Did you think I was in love with him?"

Mrs. Rogers shakes her head slowly and answers, "He's a man I should have chosen for you—one of a thousand for his virtues and breeding—to say nothing of his wealth."

"Then he deserves a paragon. His wife doesn't sit in this chair."

There is something aggressive and mutinous in Fanny's manner: for Mrs. Rogers extends her hands and says, "Very well, very well, my dear; let us have no arguments."

"I think his wife *does* sit in that chair," exclaims Ethel. "I'll bet five pairs of gloves that you will marry him."

"What makes you so wise? did you overhear him propose?" says Fanny, flushing up while her eyes sparkle dangerously.

"You are very sorry for him, aren't you, dear? and everybody knows what thing pity is akin to."

Fanny, casting for any meaning in Ethel's language to fling herself upon, answers loftily—

“I am sorry to have given pain to a kind old gentleman.”

“Not so old,” says Mrs. Rogers, rebukingly.

“I don't call him young,” Fan mutters sulkily. “He's old enough to look up to and be respectful before; and that's not nice.”

“He is a perfect gentleman,” cries Mrs. Rogers warmly. “He would have made you happy, and I am sorry that it's not to be: that is, if you ask my opinion.”

“That's my opinion,” says Ethel demurely.

“I don't care for your opinion, Ethel; and I don't want to hear it, that's more,” exclaims Fan. “A great deal of interest you really take in the whole thing! I am older than you, and you should listen to my remarks without presuming to give advice, miss.”

Ethel turns up her pretty little nose at this and looks down upon the ground as scornfully as her sweetness will let her ; but she soon recovers her smile and says gently—

“I take a very great deal of interest, dear ; but I’ll say no more since you distrust me.”

“I *can’t* see why you should be sorry that I haven’t accepted Colónel Swayne, mamma,” exclaims Fan feverishly. “You don’t express the least surprise that he should propose after knowing me for so short a time.”

“You knew each other at Brighton ; and besides, his judgment isn’t like that of a *very* young man. He may be trusted to know that he is acting correctly and judiciously,” answers Mrs. Rogers.

Fan grasps the teapot which the servant has brought in and makes herself a cup of tea, pouting and glowing through the steam as it rises under her nose.

“However, my dear,” continues Mrs.

Rogers, talking with both her hands extended, "what I say now, and what I have thought over and over again is—please yourself. God forbid that I should advise you against your inclinations. I am flattered by the compliment that Colonel Swayne has paid you."

"There's no great compliment," grumbles Fan.

"Oh, he's very rich, dear, and might have a large choice," says Ethel reproachfully.

Fan scowls at her, and says that she thought she wasn't going to speak again; and she pushes away her tea-cup, and gets up yawning and stretching her arms.

"Are you going to bed?" asks Mrs. Rogers.

"Yes, but not before Ethel; I'll see her out of the room first."

"Oh, I'm going," says Ethel laughing, and leaving her chair.

"The moment my back is turned," Fanny

goes on, "Ethel will begin to give her opinion, and it's too much to expect that I should let her have all the talking and not be near to contradict her."

"Good-night, auntie," says Ethel with another laugh. "Good-night, Fanny. You have a generous opinion of me, haven't you? but it doesn't matter. The very best motives will be misjudged sometimes."

And with a charming little sigh, as sincere as her smile, she goes out of the room.



CHAPTER IV.

RATHER SENTIMENTAL.

FANNY takes a long time in getting into bed that night. The moon that lighted them on the sea is at the back of the house, and its pale radiance makes the trees sickly, and all the prospect is a dim silent mist.

Fan is rather upset by her mamma's unexpected reception of her bit of news. But not by this only. The offer of marriage is a quite new experience in her life, and her warm heart grieves over the memory of pain she has given to a worthy honourable

gentleman. Could she help it? She gives loose to her thoughts now, and tells herself that she loves Jack Huntley. Yet, oddly enough, she does not love him so well that she cannot wish she had never met him.

Somehow she feels that she has done a violence to deep instincts in her in refusing Colonel Swayne. Her mind goes up to him, absent and rejected, and thinks of his genial courtesies and tender amiability, and the reverence for her his address and language exhibit. She thinks of Jack on a level, and doubts him for his youth, and dabbles conjecturally and querulously in his past, which may hide a score of loves for anything she knows, and ponders and ponders with irritable emotion until yawns wide and loud as an old woman's overtake her, when she pulls the abominable pads out of her glorious heavy hair, and gets into bed.

She sleeps well when once her eyes are closed, and, perhaps, dreams that Jack is

kissing her, whilst the Colonel looks on with a face of anguish. She is awakened by a smart knock on the door—one of those knocks which in the language of knuckles means: “This is the fifth time, and yer haven’t answered once.”

“What is it?” cries out Fan, and her big eyes open under her shaggy hair as Charlotte comes in, and says—

“Here’s another letter, miss, brought by the same party as come with the first. There’s no answer, he says,” and she folds up a petticoat that has fallen from a chair, and goes out of the room.

It’s not easy to read when you are just awakened, and Fan has to rub her eyes and frown steadily at the envelope before she can see that the plain address is in the Colonel’s handwriting. This perceived, she wakes up thoroughly, looks frightened, breaks open the envelope, and balancing herself on her elbow, reads the following:—

“DEAR MISS ROGERS,—

“I cannot force myself to leave Havenstown without sending one parting word to you. I am afraid that I acted unfairly last evening. I took you by surprise; but unhappily our errors are never clear to us until they are past recalling. You are dearer to me than ever language of mine could express; and be sure you will remain so, far removed as you are from me now by your own confession of indifference. If ever, by any means in my power, I can help to contribute to your happiness, I entreat you not to neglect to give me a sincere pleasure. If a kind thought for me comes into your mind, send it and make me happy. You know both my addresses in London. Bid your kind mother and charming cousin farewell for me. God bless you.

“Your sincere and attached friend,

“GEORGE SWAYNE.”

Fan lets the paper drop, and thinks with

her nose in the air and her eyes staring at the ceiling. A great many impulses go to work in her, and the chances are, if she were dressed, she would sit down and write a dozen letters to the Colonel, none of which would please her, and so none would be sent.

What makes him in love with her, she wonders? and she speculates absurdly. But when she thinks of Jack, and asks herself what makes her in love with him, she fancies she understands. Of course we always understand ourselves, don't we? Jack is handsome, Jack is young, Jack has an eye that can look things which no great orator's tongue could deliver more eloquently; in short, Jack is a dear fellow, and if his youth and his eyes aren't the reasons of her love, then something else is; and results are all that we have to care about in this life.

The sunshine lies brilliantly on the window-blind, and sets Fanny thinking of yesterday's cruise: then—has the Colonel

really sailed away? She is seaman enough now to know that a sailing vessel can't move without wind, so she goes to the window and looks at the trees. Yes, there is wind enough to fill the sails of the "Egeria;" it stirs the glistening leaves, it breathes softly through the casement which Fan flings up, and makes wisps of her hair tickle the snow of her neck.

All the same she determines to go after breakfast to the harbour, and see for herself if the yacht is gone. She hopes it hasn't, she hopes it has; she doesn't know what she hopes. Her generous nature makes her sorry for this man who has put his happiness in her power. It is hard upon her that she can't show her cordial liking for him by anything short of an impossibility.

Presently she is dressed, and goes downstairs with the letter in her pocket. Mamma is getting up, but hasn't left her room yet, and Ethel of course is still in

bed. Fan reads the letter again, and talks aloud to herself,—

“He didn’t take me by surprise at all. I felt sure, even at Brighton, that he’d propose some day or other. But how silly not to see that I don’t love him! Jack knows I love him—I feel sure of that—and what is plain to one ought to be plain to another. Oh, dear, he made me so wretched until I fell asleep in bed!” which she says so emphatically, that she is surprised by her own voice, stares around as though she fancies some one is speaking in the room, and then sits sideways on a chair with her arms over the back of it, and looks out of window.

Mrs. Rogers comes in and says, “Good-morning, dear; you’re up early after your fatigue yesterday.”

“My adorer is going with white sails flowing, the seas to roam,” answers Fanny. “Here’s a bit of pathos that ought to have made me cry.”

Mamma puts out an eager hand for the letter, fixes her glasses and reads.

"He's as gentlemanly in his letters as in his conversation," says she. "There's something charming to my mind in the tone of this note. What are his London addresses?"

"Why the Asinæum Club is one, and his rooms are in Jermyn Street, I think. But why should he suppose that I remember these things? I only know them by hearing him talk at the Brittlebanks."

"I think he is right when he says that he took you by surprise," says Mrs. Rogers, reading the letter again. "Had he given you more time, I do believe, love, that you would have seen him with my eyes."

"I do see him with your eyes: but you're not in love with him and neither am I."

Mrs. Rogers examines the corner of her

apron and says, "I should answer that letter, dear."

"What for? it would look as if I will and I won't. He has made me his bow, and what's the use of my calling him back to shake hands? He'd like me to write and talk sentimentally and vaguely about *some of these days*—but 'some of these days' are in the next life and have nothing to do with him and me, I guess."

"Oh, my dear, don't be Americanish. The subject is not a funny one. It makes me very thoughtful. But as I said last night, I'll not express an opinion. You must judge for yourself." And with the corner of her apron so close to her nose that she squints, she adds to herself in an audible voice, "He need not have hurried away. He is too sensitive. The best of things take time;" whilst Fan grins with a mutinous twinkle in her eyes over the soliloquy.

When breakfast is ready Charlotte comes

in with a tray that is to carry breakfast to Ethel in bed. The sweet thing has sent down her message to auntie : "She is so sorry not to be able to get up ; she is very tired after yesterday's voyage ; she hopes dear auntie will excuse her."

When the maid goes away with the tray Fanny says :

"When Ethel gets married I don't think her husband will love her any the better for not coming down to breakfast. I wish Colonel Swayne would transfer his affection to her. She'd suit him better than I. She'd look well, hanging on to his polite elbow, in a long satin skirt."

"The men don't seem to take to Ethel as they do to you," observes Mrs. Rogers complacently. "I should like to see her well married. There's no doubt she is a great responsibility, though she is a good girl and doesn't make me feel it. By the way, I forgot to ask you last night—do you think there is anything between her and that young Mr. Huntley?"

Fan answers suddenly—"No! . . . at least I don't know. Have you noticed anything?"

"Well, I thought they looked at each other a good deal that evening when Jenny drank tea here. And she seemed anxious, I thought, to get him into the omnibus on the day of the picnic. Were they much together yesterday on the yacht?"

"No, not a bit more than was decent," answers Fan sulkily, and she closes her knife and fork over the half-consumed omelette she was eating with an appetite when her mamma began to speak.

"Don't say decent, dear," says mamma : "that's not the word at all."

Fan drinks her tea and puts the cup down excitedly.

"I should be sorry to see Mr. Huntley pay Ethel any particular attention, enough I mean to induce her to think of him," continues Mrs. Rogers. "You know, my dear, I am not easily prejudiced : but I must say, that I have not been greatly prepossessed

by the little I have seen of Mr. Huntley."

Fan knows her mother's literal nature too well to suppose that anything more is implied in all this than what is expressed.

"What has Mr. Huntley done to make you dislike him?"

"You rush to extremes, dear. I do not dislike him. I know nothing of him. How could he have *done* anything, my love? I only mean that he does not appear a very desirable person to be thrown much in the way of a young girl like Ethel, whose love of poetry expresses a very susceptible and romantic nature."

"I don't think he cares a fig about Ethel," exclaims Fanny, warmly. "I am *sure* he doesn't. No man likes things made of pearl-powder and eau-de-cologne." And she breaks into a rather savage laugh as she says, "He couldn't sigh in her face without spoiling her complexion."

"You should not speak so bitterly,"

says Mrs. Rogers reprovingly. "She is your cousin, and an orphan, and dependent on our love. She doesn't powder to that degree. I know that she uses powder, for I found a puff in her room the other day and was nearly throwing it into the fireplace. But vanities of this kind are soon outgrown; at least they ought to be, though I am well aware that women old enough to be Ethel's mother use powder with the idea that it makes them look young."

Fan doesn't much relish this conversation, and stops it by leaving the table. She grows peevish in thinking over her mother's remarks about Jack, and rather ill-naturedly goes to the piano and plays it with a reference in her mind to Ethel in bed and perhaps asleep. In different ways she kills an hour and then goes for her hat. Many humours have visited her by turns during this hour, and now she is very low-spirited. She has the good sense to keep away from Ethel's bedroom: feeling quite

sure that if the lazy little beauty were to breathe a word to her about Colonel Swayne she would quarrel wildly.

"I am going to see if the yacht has really gone, mammy," she says, putting her head into the parlour when she returns from her room.

"Very well, my dear," answers Mrs. Rogers, not without a certain tone of approval in her voice, as though she finds the errand a proper one. Fan notices this and walks off with a swinging tread, an indication of impatience. How blind everybody is! she thinks to herself. Why do they talk of Jack and Ethel instead of Jack and me? And she remembers what a jealous pain ran through her when the Colonel asked her if Jack wasn't in love with Ethel; and how it was triumphed over later on when she noticed Jack's scowl at her and the Colonel as they talked.

In short the poor girl is going through the first stage of love and its doubts and thrills, and its odious questionings and

blissful reassurances. We cut our prettiest tears with cries and convulsions, and our early emotions spring up amid like sufferings. Fanny's dark proud eyes see nothing but the thoughts in her mind as she walks; but their introspective expression makes them beautiful with the shadow of sadness. Her face is a choice natural masterpiece at this moment ; and that dear literal Mrs. Rogers, with her prosaic eye and kindly commonplace face, should be her mamma, seems as curious as that a duck should be hatched by a hen.

Yet there are enough absurdities in the streets to keep her amused, had she a mind to look outwards instead of inwards. An excursion train arrived this morning from London, and besides bringing a load of people from the East-end, has picked up *en route* a wonderful variety of country folk, who are sick of hops and cherries and want a bath and a view of the horizon. All these people, and they have flooded the place in a concourse of seven hundred

strong, having been dragged by two engines in the Lord knows how many carriages—crowd the streets just now in search of beer and wittals. The rustic set are endurable enough, plain holiday folks uncomfortable in their Sunday clothes, with broad accents and loud admiring voices. But the East-enders are dreadful. Many of them left home drunk, and here they are still drunk. Some have tied pocket handkerchiefs over their chimney-pots and under their chins, and pimples and red hair look very picturesque in this guise, believe me. The women carry their bonnets on the back of their heads, and their hair lies in streaks on their forehead, and the bottom of their long petticoats are an agreeable mixture of mud and embroidery. Unfortunately there is no good temper, no appearance of enjoyment among them; they are hilarious with drink, and the kindest moralist can only hurry past them with wrinkled nose.

Fan escapes the swaggering groups by a

short cut to the harbour, and when the long white pier is before her and the blue water of the harbour and the sea, she looks for the "Egeria," and finds her gone.

Well, she is sorry.

That is her first feeling. She is sorry to lose a flattering admirer and to have been the means of his leaving Havenstown. She goes down to the pier-house, and says to a boatman—

"What's become of the yacht that was here yesterday?"

"The schooner d'ye mean, miss?"

"Yes."

"Why, she got under weigh this morning a little after eight. There she is; you can just see her."

And he points to a small triangular cloud upon the sea out by the Downs.

"Lend me your telescope for a moment, will you?" says Fan.

The glass is one of those five-barrelled implements which boatmen carry in their

pockets, and with which they are in the habit of exploring the horizon, with the humane hope of finding something ashore. The yacht stands out clearly, and shows the sun on her hull, which has a slight heel shorewards. Fan gives her head a little toss as she returns the telescope, and walks away, followed some distance by the man, who keeps on saying, "Boat, miss? Nice day for a row, miss. Bootiful day for a boat, miss. 'Elthy exercise is the oars, miss. Fine for the lungs it is."

The fact is, Fanny has searched for her flag and not found it. The burgee is at the main, but there is no white flag at the fore. "I have not been Captain very long," she says to herself, with a sneer that isn't genuine, and if the Colonel had jilted her she could hardly feel more fretful.

She gets on the pier and stands awhile looking over on to the sands. The water is low and is going out. The excursionists swell the mob of visitors, and the crowd

looks very big. A lot of people, male and female, young and old, are paddling with naked legs in the water. Wherries put off from the sands loaded to the gunwale with excited gents and ladies; women in bathing-dresses bob up and down, hand in hand, and fly away from the breakers and splash and scream. Yonder is a fellow in long hair and a white handkerchief round his unwashed throat, howling out an extempore sermon at the top of his horrible voice. Close by sits a blind man droning out the contents of a wooden-lettered Bible, which he reads with dirty finger-nails. And near the irrepressible Punch and Judy is a man with an electrical apparatus, who roars out, "A penny a shock! a penny a shock! come and try your strength, gents. It's a joyful feeling, ladies! a penny a shock!" Groups of children dig with wooden spades, and throw sand at each other. Fat men lie back with the dignity of publicans, cheesemongers, butchers, recreating themselves in wooden arm-chairs—I beg pardon,

arm-*cheers*—exposing an amplitude of satin waistcoat to the beams of the sun, with their yellow shoes on chairs. The band beats a tremendous music; the engines shriek in the station, and the scene, as far as the bend of the white cliff, is a panorama of shifting colours, with such a confusion of noises coming up out of it as no pen must hope to describe.

Fan is in the act of turning away to walk she hardly knows where, when she sees Jack Huntley coming down the pier. She would like him to join her, but there is a perverse mood in her just now in spite of her inclinations, and she turns her back again, and feigns to be engrossed in watching the people on the sands.

There is a row of persons on either side of her, and Jack may easily overlook her as he passes, so she thinks, whether she hopes it or not; but her fine figure is a conspicuous object, and is bound to attract a young fellow's eye, let him be never so

inattentive. Jack is at her side in a moment.

"How do you do, Miss Rogers?"

"Oh, how do you do?" Pretending surprise.

"Our friend is gone," he says at once.

"The yacht has left the harbour; but how do you know she is not coming back?"

"Because I asked a man on the pier here, and he told me that the skipper of the yacht said they were going to Southampton."

"You needn't look so pleased. Colonel Swayne is a very kind, hospitable man, and leaves us all his debtors," she says.

"Am I pleased? I didn't know. And you?"

"I am very sorry."

"Oh!" he exclaims, dryly; "I did not expect that answer. I thought you would have been able to keep him, had his going been painful to you."

"Why do you say that?" she asks, with a flash in her eyes as they sweep over his face and settle on the ground.

"We can't talk here, Miss Rogers; the sun is scorching. Are you in the humour for a stroll?"

"Which way?"

"Along the sands—out of the roar of the mob. It looks cool over there near the cliffs, and we shall have the rocks and salt air there almost to ourselves."

"I'll walk that way if you like," she says, and accompanies him on to the sands.

Conversation is almost out of the question until they have reached the outskirts of the mob, out of the deafening roar of the band and Punch and the preacher and the niggers. Here the sands, unploughed by twice two thousand feet, are hard and brown; all under the cliff is shadow, with many a cool inviting cave, and huge half-buried rock of chalk, overplastered at its base with seaweed, drying a pale green in

the sun. The rocks in the water lie low and black, and flash as the thin breakers pass over them and leave them bare. The breeze comes right across the sea, and brings pure exhilarating odours from the strings of seaweed which lie in dark green fields over the stretch of rocks. Some half-dozen persons wade among these rocks exploring for what they may find ; and now and again a hollow in the cliff frames a pair of lovers—and the love-making that goes on in the summer season at Haventown is not of the delicate kind that compels a man to remove his arm from a girl's waist when anybody passes that way.

"This is pleasanter than the pier, isn't it?" says Jack.

"Much. You are making a pretty long stay in Havenstown, aren't you?"

"I shall stop here until I go," he answers. "My lodgings are very comfortable, and I like the town."

"I should have thought it rather too vulgar for most men's tastes."

"Not too vulgar for mine, I assure you. Did the Colonel find it vulgar that he hurried away?"

"I thought you'd come back to him. I made sure you couldn't leave him alone long. He is a dear friend of mine, Mr. Huntley, and you must please talk of him kindly."

He looks at her to see if she is joking, then says with an air of reserve—

"I had something to say to you last evening on the yacht, but you broke away and wouldn't let me speak. Was the Colonel the cause?"


"What were you going to say?"

"Allow me to repeat my question: Was the Colonel the cause of your refusing to hear me?"

"Yes."

He grows a shade paler, and digs the stick he carries into the sand as he lounges along.

"I wonder what I am going to have the pleasure of hearing?" he exclaims.



“What would you like to hear?” she exclaims, laughing.

“Are you going to marry the Colonel?” he inquires, whipping out the words violently.

“Is that one of the questions in the Church Catechism? You ask it as if you were a Sunday-school teacher.”

“Are you going to marry the Colonel?” he repeats, softening his voice a little, and puzzled by her eyes.

“What business is that of yours?”

“Because I love you,” he answers quickly.

The blood rushes to her face. She says—“Oh!” awkwardly, and looks away over the sea so as to hide her face from him.

“That is my reason,” he goes on, “and it gives me a right to ask the question. Answer me, for God’s sake.”

She is too nervous to coquet with him now, and answers tremulously,—

"No, I am not going to marry the Colonel."

In an instant he has got hold of her hand, and kisses, and holds it as they walk.

"Now I may call you Fanny, mayn't I? I may tell you that I love you now?"

"Say all that is nice, but please don't frighten me," she says with her eyes on the sands, whereat he laughs softly, and kisses her hand again.

"My darling, what is your answer to my confession?"

"What ought it to be?" she replies scarce audibly.

"That you love me, dearest!"

"It is true, but it oughtn't to be," in the same faint voice.

"If it is true that's enough, my pet; though why oughtn't it to be?"

"Because mamma doesn't like you."

"Oh, I don't mind that," he answers.
"Who is liked by his sweetheart's mother?"

"She likes Colonel Swayne very much."

"Naturally."

"He asked me to marry him last night."

"Did he?"

"Yes, just before you were going—you were going——"

"Quite true, darling; and you refused him?"

"Yes."

"Brave little woman! because you loved me?"

"Because I didn't love him."

"Oh, no; say because you loved me."

"Don't squeeze my hand so tight, *dear*: the ring hurts."

That *dear* so prettily introduced is simply ravishing; his hand ceases to be a vice, and becomes loving fingers.

"And you refused him?"

"Yes. I was sorry to do so, because he is good and kind, and I like him."

"So he is! so he is!" cries Jack warmly.

"And when I came to ask you——"

"Go on," she says, finding he pauses.

"I am waiting for you to finish."

"Well, I know what you want me to say. I was pained and fretted by his sorrow, for he did look very, very sorry; and when you came to ask me, as you call it, I felt that it would be disloyal to my regard and friendship for him to listen to you, and so I walked away."

"But how did you know what I was going to say?"

"Oh, the moment you mumbled 'Fanny' I knew what was coming. You looked too foolish, Jack, to be going to say something ordinary."

"Did you think I would ever propose to you, Fanny darling?"

"Well, perhaps and perhaps not, and I won't tell you. You have been in love with me some time, Jack, I think. You were dreadfully jealous of the Colonel; but you have made me uneasy too, I can tell you, you wicked flirt."

"How is that? I have been dreaming of

you ever since we first met—in a crowd, do you remember? what a crowd! I haven't had a thought for another living creature: that's as true as that you are Fanny."

"Oh," she says, happy in her heart to hear him talk like this, as a bird is in a sudden flood of sunshine. "I have sometimes fancied you were in love with Ethel. You have flirted with her, haven't you?"

"Never!"

"Let go my hand, story-teller. How dare you say never?"

"Never!"

"I don't believe you."

"But it's true, darling."

"Do you mean really?"

"Really."

On which she consents to believe him, and they walk on hand-in-hand awhile in silence.

"I say," she exclaims suddenly, "do you know that I'm dreadfully wicked?"

"What's the matter?"

"I'm allowing you to make love to me when I ought to be packing you to the right about."

"Please go on."

"Well, haven't I said that mamma doesn't like you?"

"And haven't I said that I don't care?"

"But you ought to care, sir!" she says with a roguish frown at him. "*I do. I'll not quarrel with mamma for you.*"

"Fanny is a pet who will quarrel with the whole world for me. I know her! if I didn't, could I love her as I do?"

She smothers a laugh and says,

"Are you aware that I am very poor?"

"Are you? what are you worth?"

"Just nothing at all. You're very poor too, aren't you?"

"Very. I wish you wouldn't speak of it. It's not a pleasant subject," he says with a grimace.

"What's the use of being in love if we can't live?" Fan wants to know.

"Would you have us commit suicide?"

"Jack, if we are in earnest we must think. What am I to tell mamma?"

"I can't think walking," answers Jack. "Let's sit down. The sand is dry yonder."

They walk close to the base of the cliff where the shadow is broad and cool, and seat themselves. The sweet salt air comes in draughts, and the pools among the rocks seem on fire with the sun. The horizon is exquisitely clear, and the unbroken line, lying white with the morning light upon it under the pale-blue of the far-off sky, is relieved by here and there a ship lazily swimming down Channel with all her canvas set. The projecting cliffs shut out the pier. They might be miles away from Havens-town for anything they can see of it.

"Now, then, let us indulge in financial views," says Jack. "Give me your hand, Fanny. First say, 'Jack, I will marry you.'"

"No need to say that. We are not acting. We have nothing to convey to

other people, and we know our own meaning, Jack."

"What beautiful eyes you have, dear——"

She interrupts him with a fit of laughter.

"That is Little Red Ridinghood. 'O granny, what great teeth you have!' Never mind my eyes, you flatterer. If my eyes are all you admire, you'll find a dozen brighter pairs on the sands this morning, I dare say, to fall in love with."

"Then I'll talk of money."

"Say something, then."

"My papa is a rich man, and I am his only son."

"I am not thunderstruck, dear; so don't look excited."

"He allows me two hundred a year."

"Which you spend."

"Yes, indeed," he answers, laughing: "every farthing of it, and a trifle over. However, he always pays my bills . . . Why do you look downwards so thoughtfully?"

"I am thinking that you will hate me

for my making you tell me these sordid facts. I love you, dear, and would marry you if you had as little as I have to live on—only—only, Jack, I want our love to be happy—I don't want any—any *rows*! I want mamma to be pleased, and that's why I am asking things I hate to ask."

He takes her in his arms and kisses her. It is a glorious privilege. He may feel instinctively sure that no other man's lips have ever saluted that womanly, proud, handsome face. The blood dyes her cheeks, her eyes grow exquisitely tender; and she lays her head upon his shoulder like a child.

"Look at those wretches staring!" raising her head quickly. "I should like to throw a stone at them!"

They are a small band of men and women holding their shoes and stockings in their hands. They grin and wink as they go by, and one of them, with his trowsers turned up to his knees, blows a

kiss to the sky, and excites a screech of laughter from the rest. They pass on and are presently looking for shells among the rocks.

"It serves me right," Fan exclaims angrily. "I have no business to be sitting here with you like this."

And she gets up, sending flaming glances after the people who grinned at her.

"Don't mind them, dear. If they're not drunk they ought to be," says Jack. "Which way shall we go?"

"Home," answered Fan shortly.

"It's not my fault that those idiots sniggered at us," he says so boyishly that she laughs and takes his hand, but drops it immediately, exclaiming,

"I oughtn't to be here, Jack. I oughtn't to be talking to you."

"Because why?"

"Because of mamma. I'll tell her where I've been when I get home——"

"Why must you?" he interrupts.

"Because I must."

“What will happen then?”

“She’ll say, ‘There’s no use talking, my dear. I had hoped you would have acted very differently. I cannot give my consent—so don’t ask me;’ and she’ll think of Colonel Swayne and grow hard in the face. She’s an old darling when things go right, but she can grow very hard in the face sometimes, Jack.”

They are now walking towards the gap in the cliff, up which they can clamber in order to get home through the fields behind the town. He says in a rather constrained voice,

“I don’t see that we need much care about hard faces, nor hard words either, for the matter of that. It’s not to be a question of money between you and me, Fanny.”

“Why do you look so angry?”

“Well, I don’t like your reference to Colonel Swayne.”

“Do you want to quarrel with me, you bad-tempered thing?”

He laughs and tries to kiss her ; but she breaks away, shaking her rough beautiful hair, and crying, " Not again, thanks."

" Let me hold your hand, then."

" You may do that ; but you must drop it if anybody comes."

" Fanny, I'm going to ask you not to tell your mother about our engagement until I hear from my father."

She looks thoughtful, and answers, " Will that do any good ?"

" Yes, I think so. The old fellow is often bullying me for not getting married ; and when I tell him I'm engaged, and describe you to him, he may throw himself into a generous attitude, and then your mother will find me taller and more moral."

" Help me up here, Jack. You're horribly lazy ! Hold out your hand, and pull properly."

They mount the narrow sandy road that lies in a great break of the cliff. The white chalk, seamed with flint, towers on either

hand, and the ascent is so precipitous that when they have reached the green fields atop they are both as red as turkey-cocks, and pant for breath.

The sea is at their feet now, and from that height looks green. The ships which stood on the horizon viewed from the sands, are sailing in the middle of the sea, and on the right, a dim blue cloud streaked with white, is the coast of France. The crops all around are breast high, and the summer breeze flings them into graceful waves. An old windmill, close at hand, turns lazily, and the long shadows of its sails run round upon the ground in an endless chase after each other. They can hear the band playing upon the sands and the soft wash of the breakers at their feet.

"Do you see what I mean, darling?" Jack says, after he has got his breath. "I shall be able to know exactly what to do when I have heard from my father, and until then let us keep our secret."

He passes his hand through her

arm, and walks with her close beside him.

If love breeds love, then certainly his love for her ought to be deep; for the eyes she raises to his face are soft and beautiful with her passion; her smile reveals a wonderful happiness. Were he blind he could tell by her voice what her thoughts are for him. There is real music in the low, sweet tones in which she makes her answers to his impassioned questions.

She will keep her secret, she says, until he tells her to make it known; and this passivity in a girl as proud as Lucifer, with fiery qualities, with a nature candid as the sunlight, with instincts as antagonistic to concealment as a bit of steel is to the unmagnetised pole of the loadstone, is such a tribute to their love as the most cynical reader must heartily wish Mr. Jack the mind to appreciate.

That walk home! Such walks are few in our lives, and we remember them when better things are forgotten. The high

crops billowing to the sweet wind, the pure blue heavens, with the hidden larks singing in them, the old windmill turning its grey sails round and round, the broad, green, far-down space of sea running up to the sky, the richly-scented hedges—things familiar to Fanny as her hand, but idealised now by the love through which she looks at them, fill her mind with a green and beautiful memory, to be present to her when other remembrances which promised permanency are effaced.

So froth is on the surface, and we drink, and the froth settles on the bottom; and the beginning and the end are froth. What matters? Fill the sparkling bowl, my hearty! Here's to ye, sweethearts! one swinging bumper; and as ye pass away, hand in hand, we'll sit and moralise over the lingering bubbles that wink at us from the bottom of our empty cup.



CHAPTER V.

JACK'S CATHOLICITY.

LOVE is a rather difficult secret to keep. It's like a fine passage in a book: one wants a listener to read it out to. How Fan keeps her secret I do not pretend to know. She was born with a highly communicative nature, and must have been a score of times on the verge of blabbing. She had excuses for doing so again and again. It must be owned that Mrs. Rogers had taken a strong liking to Colonel Swayne, and was never tired of saying what a fine gentleman he was.

Now all her observations had reference to the offer Fanny had received, and they were all as good as saying: "My dear, you ought to have accepted him. It is not too late even now. Think well over his virtues and fortune, and you'll find him one in a million." These praises grated harshly on Fanny's ear; and I should consider it wonderful that mamma didn't find out the secret by the expression Fanny's face took on these occasions, if I didn't know, with all the rest of the world, that the last to find things out are the people who ought to discover them first.

For a whole week—but not longer, and you shall hear why presently—Fan keeps her counsel as closely as a priest the confession he receives. If Ethel has a suspicion she is as deep as Fan, and knows how to hold her tongue quiet. That she *must* suspect something is certain, for two reasons: first, by the change in Fan, the fits of abstraction which seize her, her subdued cautious language, her trick of quitting the

house furtively, and reappearing after a morning's absence as if she had just left her bedroom ; and, secondly, by having one morning, from the pier, seen Fanny and Jack walking slowly towards the sheltered part of the sands, away from the crowd.

She wouldn't have seen them but for Jenny Matthews, who was with her, and who sometimes goes about with an opera-glass slung over her back. Jenny was looking through the glasses at the people, when she called out,

"There's Johnny ! The wretch has found a companion ! Who is it ? Oh, my dear, it's Captain Fanny !" and she bursts into a laugh and cries, "Look at them, Miss Saunders," and hands Ethel the glasses.

This might mean nothing but an accidental rencontre, though it affected Ethel curiously for all that. Her little throat grew parched, and her white teeth fastened cruelly upon her under-lip, and the sickness which most wretches who have been in love know seized her, and she had to keep the

glasses before her face for as long a time as would occupy her to count five hundred before she could get sufficient hold of her smile to fix it properly.

"It looks as if they were in love, rather, doesn't it?" Jenny says. "And yet I don't know; merely walking with a fellow doesn't prove much."

"Oh, Mr. Huntley admires my cousin, there is no doubt," answers Ethel; "and I don't see how he can help doing so. She is a very handsome girl. But I don't think he will find that her actions always express her true feelings."

"Well now, Johnny tells me he likes her because she is so thoroughly honest. It would be good fun to see him made a fool of. He is an awful flirt," Jenny says, grinning at the crowd, with the glasses at her eyes.

"Does he talk much of her to you?"

"No—not very much. He talks of you as often as of her," answers Jenny, looking at Ethel, and bestowing a nod on her.

"What does he say of us?" inquires Ethel, in the voice of a person who asks a question without the smallest interest in the reply.

"I'll not be so personal as to answer, and so you must guess, my dear," answers blunt Miss Jenny; and she holds out the glasses to Ethel, and cries, "Look at that enormously fat woman, sitting for her portrait! There must be a thousand curls on her forehead. Whom can so much ugliness and fat be sitting for? Is there a living creature who wants *her* likeness?"

Ethel looks amused as she points the glasses at the fat woman, and then says—

"If Mr. Huntley is a flirt I think he's got his match in Fanny. Did you hear that Colonel Swayne proposed to her?"

"Yes. Your aunt told mamma. Tell us all about it, will you? Why did she refuse him?"

"I don't fancy she did refuse him," says Ethel, with an odd smile.

"Do you mean to say they're engaged?" cries Jenny, staring.

"No, not exactly; but I think it's only a question of patience. She is sure of him, for he is really very devoted to her—and for some reason she is in no hurry to marry. She wants to do a little execution first, I dare say, and thinks your friend Johnny fair game to fool—and so he is, if he's the flirt you say he is."

"That's not right, though, is it? At least—I don't quite understand you," replies Jenny, continuing to stare, and mightily pleased with the prospect of hearing something curious.

"It's not very intelligible to me, and so perhaps I can't explain my ideas intelligibly," answers Ethel, laughing. "But I am pretty certain Colonel Swayne's proposal of marriage was not rejected."

"How very odd! but could she keep a staid old fellow like that dangling?"

"Why yes, because he's fond of her, and she's rather clever."

“And you say that her object is to make fool of Johnny?”

“No, no! don’t misunderstand me. That’s only a little idea of mine, and I don’t say it’s not silly. As I am *sure* that she and the Colonel understand each other, I can’t imagine why she walks with Mr. Huntley, and suggests that there is something between them, unless she thinks him a flirt, and means to pay him out before she writes to the Colonel to come and marry her.”

The blue eyes look up archly, and one would swear that Ethel secretly enjoys Fan’s incomprehensible scheme. Very incomprehensible it is, and Jenny is puzzled. The jealous little beauty has not a very inventive genius, and her blundering fiction would infallibly lay her heart bare did sharper eyes than Jenny’s survey her.

But Jenny supposes that Ethel knows more than she is likely to confess, and, in a mysterious voice, says—

“Did Captain Fanny tell you this?”

Ethel smiles and makes no answer.

Jenny goes on: "Has Johnny any notion, do you think, that there is a secret understanding between Miss Rogers and Colonel Swayne?"

"He is your friend, and Fanny is my cousin," Ethel answers, "and I know which of the two it is my duty to support."

"Oh, I don't want you to tell tales out of school," cries Jenny. "But what a silly man the Colonel must be to take yes and no, as it were, for an answer, and leave his Captain here to carry on with Johnny."

"The men are quite able to take care of themselves," says Ethel, and her beauty looks saucy as she speaks. "Some girls like to have a lot of strings to their bow; but I don't think if I made a man like Colonel Swayne believe that I liked him, that I could wrong him by amusing myself with making a fool of another man, could you?"

"No, that's playing fast and loose. It's not honourable. But what made the

Colonel leave Havenstown so hurriedly ?
Your aunt said it was because Miss Rogers
had refused him."

Ethel shakes her head with a sly
laugh.

"Suppose he had to sail in a yacht
match, and was obliged to leave. What
then ?"

"Oh, I see you know all about it."

"Don't say that. I really know nothing.
I must say good-bye now."

And she shakes Jenny's hand, and walks
away, having done her cause some service,
as she thinks, and wondering what Jack
will think when Jenny talks to him.

Who would believe her an artful un-
principled little puss that sees her walking
homewards with her demure beautiful eyes
cast down, her clear sweet face softened
as with the memory rather than with the
presence of a smile, her golden hair gleam-
ing under her irresistible hat ? Not that
hair has much to do with morals ; but out-
ward aspects are supposed to be suggestive,

and Ethel's is fairy-like for beauty and innocent as Innocence herself, with its womanly graces and freshness.

She meets Jack only once in this week, on the day when matters are to be made clear to her and others.

She is going down the High Street, and Jack is coming up, but after he has stopped talking to her a few minutes, he apologises for keeping her standing and walks with her.

Fan thinks Jack handsome, but her admiration for him does not come near Ethel's. Between ourselves he is good-looking enough, but one is not going to make him out a god just because Ethel imagines he has the air of one. The sun has improved his complexion, and his teeth are wonderfully white and even, and he has a manly look with his well-built figure and hair cropped close behind, and long mustache flaming beyond either cheek. Girls look at him pleasantly as he passes, and some turn to peep after him when he has gone by.

But it is surely because Ethel has never been out in the world that she thinks Jack adorably handsome. She can scarce smile, so overwhelmed is her silly amorous heart by his presence. The pavement is narrow, and he gets into the road to give her room ; this brings him more on a level with her face, and he can't help thinking that she has a most dainty little ear and a most lovely profile.

A man will very often believe that he can take liberties with the loyalty he owes to a sweetheart, on the grounds (satisfactory to himself) that he doesn't mean anything by it. Jack won't allow thoughts of Fanny to interfere with a desire to flirt with the sweet little creature by his side, and he remembers that Jenny told him long ago Ethel was in love with him ; and he's not such a fool but that he can look in her face, and see something there that his vanity will be at no pains to unriddle.

"One ought to miss Colonel Swayne," she says after they have talked awhile,

"this is just the day for a sail in his beautiful yacht."

And as she speaks her little heart beats quickly, for the remark is nothing but a sly ruse to make Jack speak of the Colonel in order that she may see if her chat with Jenny has been repeated.

"Didn't he make love to you, Miss Saunders?" he asks, sourly. "He appears to be a rather amorous old man."

"Why do you call him old? he is only forty—and that's the prime of life, isn't it?"

"Who says he's forty? growls Jack. "Do people have grey hair at forty?"

"Oh dear yes: black hair sometimes turns gray at thirty. You don't seem to like him. What has he done to you?" and she looks a charming curiosity.

Jack colours up a little, and answers, "I never said I don't like him. He has a beautiful yacht and smokes fine cigars. . . Don't let us go on the pier. There's nobody on the breakwater."

It's hard to guess what he would say,

and how he would act, if he knew that the delicate little vision at his side hides under her sweetness a passion that would make her consent to go God knows where with him. Her gold-coloured hair glitters in the sunlight, and her blue eyes are as soft and deep as the calm sea yonder.

She says presently, "Does my cousin Fanny tell you any of her secrets, Mr. Huntley? I want to know something."

He stares at her, and wonders if Fan has told her *the* secret, laughs and answers, "What makes you suppose I am in her confidence?"

"You are often together, aren't you?"

"We sometimes meet—as you and I have to-day."

"She is generally very candid; but there are some things she is mute upon. I can't help taking an interest in her, of course—we have lived so much together that I feel we are not half so much cousins as sisters—but I don't like to ask her blunt questions. She is rather passionate and I

am easily frightened;" and her blue eyes look wistfully up at Jack, as much as to say, "See what a weak, helpless little thing I am!"

"What is the secret you want to find out?"

"Well, it's about Colonel Swayne. I know he proposed to her; but did she refuse him?"

"How should I know if you don't?" he replies with a forced laugh. "Is it probable that Miss Rogers would tell me things she conceals from you?"

"I should like to know."

"He wouldn't have gone away in a hurry had she accepted him, would he?"

"I understood that he had to attend a sailing-match. I forget who told me. Was it Jenny Matthews? perhaps it was the Colonel himself; but I can't remember."


"Oh, Jenny is full of gossip," he says. "She was trying to make out yesterday that Miss Rogers was secretly engaged to

the Colonel. As if I care! As if it is true! At all events, I know for certain that Mrs. Rogers would give her ears to get the Colonel for a son-in-law; and since that's the case, where on earth is the necessity of secrecy between Fan—I mean Miss Rogers and the old man."

Ethel laughs and answers, "Perhaps dear Fanny wants to enjoy her liberty without actually losing her Colonel. And I am sure he dotes enough upon her to consent to any proposal she might choose to make him."

"Don't let us mind about the Colonel," says Jack. "Shall we sit down? You are in no hurry, I hope?"

"Don't let me prevent you from keeping any appointment, Mr. Huntley," she says with a significant smile, and with delight in her heart at his manner, as they seat themselves at the edge of the breakwater near where the rocks run into the sea. It is very beautiful here: the far sea shines under the sky, and the blue water ripples



round the rocks to the soft summer wind that is blowing from the west.

"From what appointment should you be keeping me? You must think me guilty of barbarous taste to suppose that I am not perfectly happy here."

She looks steadily at the water from under the shadow of her parasol. She is quite clever enough to know that he has guessed her love by the marked change in his manner and voice; but feels no instinctive recoil from the tenderness that shows him to be an egregious flirt or an egregious humbug. Perhaps her instincts are right. Extreme views would do him an injustice.

The fellow is still Fan's hot lover at heart; but the temptation to admit the delicious flattery of Ethel's love for him, subtly expressed in look and movement and tone, more coarsely conveyed in her clumsy talk about her cousin and the Colonel, is overwhelming. Were she less beautiful, unreserved loyalty would be an easy virtue for him to practise; but he can't but stop

and toy a moment with this lovely flower which expands itself so charmingly to his greeting; it will be but half-an-hour's bit of folly and then hey! for Fanny and fidelity again.

"What an odd idea that is of yours about your cousin!" he exclaims, taking a small fan that hangs by a chain from her belt and playing with it. "In marine language, she keeps the Colonel in tow but won't allow him to come alongside of her, because she wants her liberty. I don't quite see how she does it or why."

"You wouldn't have a girl reject a rich man's offer of marriage, would you, Mr. Huntley?" Ethel answers archly.

"No, but how can she send him away and keep him too?" he says, quite easy in his mind about Fanny, and tickled and gratified by Ethel's jealousy, and curious to see how she will work out her theory of her cousin.

"Oh, you must be a girl to know how these things are done."

"Pray give me an idea? It may be useful to me some day, when I find myself making love to a lady with an accepted sweetheart in the background."

"It is better that you should learn from experience. Lessons of that kind are always more lasting," she answers, turning her head away shyly. How charming her white neck looks against the golden hair sweeping upwards under her hat! What a wonderful little hand is hers! and how completely happy the effect of the small Morocco belt around her waist!

"Pray be good-hearted, Miss Saunders, and save me the pain of experience?" he says, bending forward so as to look into her face.

She laughs softly and replies, keeping her face turned from him, "I suppose it can be done by telling one's admirer that one can't give him an answer at once, that one must have time to think, and that sort of thing. If a man is *very* fond of a girl he will be quite satisfied for a good long

time with answers of that kind . . . won't he? I don't know, of course. I can only fancy so."


It is delicious to see her and hear her.

"Is that the rule for keeping a man a slave without making him a husband?"

"Something like it, I think. But a man must be very much in love not to see through it: as much in love as Colonel Swayne."

"So, then, you think that your cousin asked the Colonel for time when he proposed to her?" he says; "and that the Colonel is deeply enough in love with her to give her as much time as she wants?"

"I don't know. It's what I wish to find out—just for the fun of the thing. Besides, my aunt would be glad to feel sure that Fan is only playing, as it were, with the Colonel, and has not positively given him up. She is naturally very anxious to see her daughter in a good position, and married to a man whom, I know for *certain*, Fanny likes quite well enough to love."



Jack's grin dies out. He has been sniffing at a pretty flower, and the snake under it has given him a bite. He doesn't see the snake, but he feels the smart, and grows peevish and derisive, and glowers at the crowd on the pier.

"It's curious how well girls understand each other," he says, dropping the fan and clasping his hands over his knees. "Can you explain Miss Fanny's motive for keeping the Colonel on without consenting to marry him? There is no need of secrecy, as I have said. Her mother is wild to see them married."

"Don't call her Miss Fanny—Captain Fanny's her right title. The Colonel gave it her, and she likes it," says Ethel in a quite neat little tone of reproach.

"Confound the Colonel!" he growls; "why am I talking about him? he's nothing to me;" and then he softens his voice and says with a forced smirk, "What is Miss Rogers's motive in not engaging herself to the Colonel, if she likes him so well and

lets him think she will marry him by-and-by?"

"Why don't you ask her?"

"You are clever enough to tell me."

"I don't suppose there is any *mystery* in it. I dare say he took her by surprise, and she told him to wait a little. What more?"

"You imply more."

She shakes her head and laughs and exclaims, "How very deeply you must be in love with her, Mr. Huntley, to feel so great a curiosity about her *reasons*."

She says this and lets him look into her eyes long enough to read a meaning there over which her tongue, with all its assurance, would falter; and when she glances aside a hectic flush glows on her cheeks. She can command these airs—even her blushes—at pleasure; but this is involuntary, the genuine effect of emotion. He toys with the fan at her side again and speaks with his face inclined nearer to hers.

"One ought to be sure that one is loved in return to be deeply in love," he says. "If I know that Fanny—I mean Miss Rogers—is thinking of her Colonel, how could I love her?"

"But you do love her?" she answers, without raising her head.

He won't tell a falsehood, but he can't speak the truth in the face of the meaning Ethel is disclosing to him as completely as if her lips were at his ear, and her arms around him.

He turns the question with a laugh.

"Aren't the two things which are supposed to sweeten life more than all other earthly things at the bottom of nearly all the misery there is in the world?" he asks. "I mean love and money. The pursuit of both generally end in making wretches of us, I think."

"I know nothing of money," she answers in her sweet low voice; "but I think we may make dreadful mistakes in love."

"My father is always telling me we can't invest in a worse security than love. He ought to know—as a stockbroker."

"Is there any harm in being a stockbroker?"

"There are one or two higher callings. But I thought you would tell me that, as the son of a stockbroker, I ought to take a commercial view of love, and invest my sentiments in nothing that didn't pay well."

"Why don't you?"

"We are not permitted to choose," he answers softly.

She puts out her hand to take the fan, not knowing that he holds it; their fingers touch, and she pulls away her hand swiftly.

"Do my fingers sting?" he says with a laugh.

"I didn't know your hand was there," she replies, colouring up; and then she smiles, and pulls out a very pretty

watch, and looks at it with a thoughtful frown, but without noticing what time it is.

"You are gentler in your hints than your cousin," he exclaims, following her hand with his eyes as she thrust the watch in her belt. "If Miss Rogers wanted me to go, she'd say, 'Don't stop for me, please;' or, 'Isn't it curious, Mr. Huntley, that when I want to be alone I am always intruded on?'"

"I meant no hint by looking at my watch," Ethel replies.

"You promised on board the yacht to repeat some of your poetry to me. Do so now, will you?"

"Oh, my poetry is very weak—I'd much rather not."

"Just one verse, Miss Saunders."

"No, please don't ask me."

"What subject do you like best to write on?"

"Oh, anything that comes into my head."

"I think you would write love-songs sweetly."

She makes no answer, and begins to throw pebbles into the water.

"Only very pretty girls should write love-songs and sing them," he continues. "It's horrid profanation when a great gaunt woman goes to the piano and begins to bawl out sentiments which should be prohibited on all lips but such as yours."

She smiles but holds her tongue, and goes on throwing little stones in the water.

"You must promise to show me, some of these days, the poetry you have written. I am very curious to see the subjects you choose."

"Will you judge of my character by the subjects?"

"I think I can judge of the subjects by your character."

"Tell me them?"

It is impossible to tell what nonsense

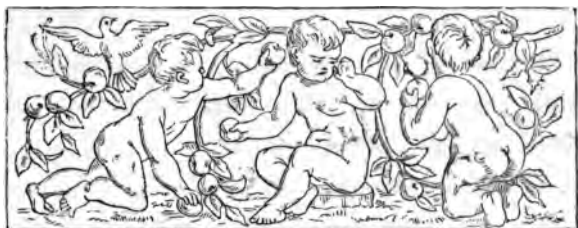
he means to answer her with, but it happens just at that moment a party of persons of the genuine seaside kind—a family consisting of a stout tall man in a great flapping wide-awake, a woman in shiny black silk and huge sand-shoes, two girls rather ghastly, with cheap jewellery, and a boy eating from a bag full of buns—come striding and talking along the break-water, waving their arms and parasols to a man in a wherry.

This irruption on the sentiment of the moment puts a stop to Jack's flow of language. Ethel rises, the flirtation is over, and they walk towards the town.

He seems to remember himself when they get among the people, his manner slightly changes, he parts with her at the bottom of the High Street, and walks towards the cliff, but stops a moment to look after her when her back is turned.

There is an expression on his face as he

pulls out a cigar and lights it that would make you laugh. It is possible he may feel himself in the position of the ass between two bundles of hay.



CHAPTER VI.

A PIECE OF IMPERTINENCE.

WHILE Ethel is walking home, the postman is striding up the straight garden path leading to the door of Mrs. Rogers's house ; and Fanny, who happens to be at the window, whilst her mamma plies the sewing-machine in a corner, goes to the door and takes the letter, and after a pretty long pause in the hall, comes into the room with it.

"Whom is it for ?" asks Mrs. Rogers.

"For you," answers Fan ; "you shall have it in a moment," and she turns the

letter about and examines the postmark and the address, and then exclaims, "I dare say it's only a circular."

It should either be that or a business letter, for the envelope is blue, and the address is very clearly decipherable, and it carries two halfpenny stamps.

Mrs. Rogers breaks it open, and finds that it contains some writing. On which she begins to read.

"What is it about, mammy?"

Mrs. Rogers does not answer.

"Who is it from, dear?"

And still Mrs. Rogers doesn't answer.

A very curious expression comes into the lady's face as she reads. One wants Mr. Cruikshank's or Mr. Hablot Browne's pencil to express it; for it is one of those compounds of alarm, amazement, indignation, doubt, and other emotions of an equally conflicting character of which no words, however nicely considered, could in any degree succeed in conveying an idea.

She drops the letter in her lap, and stares at her daughter over the top of her spectacles, and Fanny laughs hysterically at the singular face her mother puts on.

"Laughing, Fanny!" shrieks out Mrs. Rogers, her excitement abruptly flying out of her like a stream of water from a squirt. "Have you any idea whom this letter is from?"

"No, I haven't," answers Fan, her smile fading, and her cheeks turning a shade pale.

"It's signed," cries Mrs. Rogers, fumbling at the letter and darting her excited spectacles at the signature, 'Samuel Huntley.' It's Mr. John Huntley's papa. It's about you. You're engaged to be married to him!"

"Let me look at it," says Fan, very pale now, and coming forward with her hand out.

But instead of giving her the letter, Mrs. Rogers begins to read aloud:

“Leinster Square, Bayswater,
&c., &c.

“MADAM,

“On my return from the country yesterday, I found a letter from my son John, stating that he is engaged to be married to your daughter Fanny. You will, if you please, take notice that I emphatically refuse my consent to this engagement, on the grounds, madam, that my son John is a lazy fellow, who is too idle to earn a living for himself; and is, therefore, in no sense in a position to contract a marriage with any lady who cannot bring him a fortune.

“This your daughter cannot do, as he tells me. I have written to him by this post, and promised him that if he *dares* to attempt to burden me with the charges of a wife and family I will have nothing more to do with him.

“Has he told you that all the money he has in the world is two hundred pounds per annum, which I allow him? I must

hope, madam, that you have too much good sense to abet the romantic nonsense of a lazy fellow who had a good berth under Government, but threw it up out of sheer, wanton idleness. I beg that you will, from date of receipt of this communication, resolutely check his advances to your daughter,

“ And oblige, madam,

“ Yours truly,

“ SAMUEL HUNTLEY.”

Fan listens to this letter with flashing eyes, and when it is read, looks as if some hand had struck her. Her breath comes and goes furiously ; her hands lock themselves rigidly ; and her gaze, brilliant and beautiful, flames upon the letter as though it would consume it with the fires of its indignation. No words her lips could form could approach the eloquence of contempt that is conveyed by the expression of her face.

The second perusal of this letter proves too much for Mrs. Rogers's nerves. She

flings it from her with a gesture that will easily suggest where her daughter borrows her temper, and bursts into tears. But her tears lie close to the surface; they gush easily, and are easily turned off, and don't by any means choke her utterance.

"What can you *mean*," she cries out, with an unearthly emphasis on *mean*, "by acting in this manner? How *dare* you," she cries out again, with another unearthly emphasis on *dare*, "behave like this?" And her tears tumble down her cheeks, and her face looks red under them.

"Don't speak to me like that, mamma!" replies Fanny, stamping her foot. "I can't bear it. What does the old wretch mean by that letter?" And she points with a tragical forefinger to it, and then goes up and bestows such a hearty kick upon it that the toe of her boot goes clean through the paper, and she has to stand on one leg whilst she extricates herself from old Huntley's insolence.

"Fanny, I desire, I order you—I command you never to see Mr. Huntley again!" shrieks out Mrs. Rogers. "If you have one spark of feeling for me, you'll do what I tell you. What dreadful madness has made you engage yourself to this young man in secret? knowing," she gasps, "all the while that I dislike him!"

She wildly flourishes a pair of scissors, and comes staggering out from behind her sewing-machine, shaking her apron as she walks.

"If Jack is half a man," Fan says between her teeth, "he'll go to London and give his father a thorough good shaking for his disgusting impertinence. No fortune, indeed! The old miser! What is it to him whether I have a fortune or not? A miserable stockbroker—that's what he is. I should like to meet him."

"Understand," cries Mrs. Rogers, levelling a long forefinger at her, "that henceforth you and Mr. Jack Huntley, as you

call him, never have anything to do with each other again."

Fan's passion has hitherto prevented her from understanding anything but the rudeness of old Huntley's letter. Now she swings round on her heel, and says, with a hard, angry face,

"Why do you say that, mamma? What harm has Jack done?"

"Don't call him Jack," cries Mrs. Rogers, holding out her hands, and turning away her head, as if the name were an ugly object she could not look at. "I won't hear you speak of him so familiarly."

"It's not his fault that his father's a low person. He's not answerable for that letter. He's a gentleman, and I love him!" she bursts out.

Mrs. Rogers grows pale, and says in a small cold voice, "Not with my consent," and stands motionless.

"Consent! one can never get anybody's consent," exclaims Fanny, in a voice rich with tears. "It was your own fault that I

didn't tell you we were engaged. I knew how you'd receive the news ; and what was the use of letting you make me miserable, when I could remain happy by holding my tongue ?”

The door opens, and Ethel comes in. No one would suspect, from the easy smile she wears (which, however, is speedily transformed into an expression of concerned surprise), that she has been listening at the door, with her fingers on the handle, ready to seem in the act of turning it if a servant should pass and see her.

She looks at Fanny, and Fanny glares at her ; and Mrs. Rogers, with her hands clasped, stares at the sky through the window. Mr. Samuel Huntley's letter lies on the floor, and looks as much like a paper bag which has been filled with wind and then clapped between the hands as a letter can look. In the few moments' silence which follows Ethel's entrance, Mrs. Rogers's eyes come down from the sky and fix them-

selves on the floor, and then she asks Ethel to bring her that letter, and she points with her finger.

“What’s the matter, auntie?” Ethel asks, rather over-making-up her face in her anxiety not to seem to have the smallest idea of what really is the matter.

“Oh, Ethel,” exclaims Mrs. Rogers, sinking into her chair, “Fanny has been acting very foolishly, and brought a most insulting old man down upon us.”

“Look here, Ethel,” says Fan, coming up to her, and towering over her, and addressing her in a half-contemptuous, half-passionate voice, “you’ve been trying to pump me all this week, to find out if there’s anything between Jack and me; and now you may as well know that there is, and that he and I are engaged.”

“Never!” shrieks out Mrs. Rogers. “I won’t hear of it. Don’t speak of it! How dare you say so, knowing my feelings and wishes?”

Fan walks to the window, and turns her back upon the room.

"Imagine, Ethel, this letter coming to me just now," continues Mrs. Rogers in a high-pitched voice, fumbling at the crunched-up paper which Fan's fingers and toes have rendered once for all illegible, "from Mr. Huntley's father, calling my child a beggar, and his son all sorts of names, and saying that I ought to have too much sense to abet this romantic nonsense ; which is as good as saying that I have given his son encouragement. Did you ever hear of such a thing in all your life?"

"Don't make matters worse than they are," mutters Fan, at the window, without turning her head. "He called his son lazy and idle ; that's not all sorts of names."

"What do I care what he calls his son?" cries Mrs. Rogers. "How dare he write to me in that strain? does he think we are cooks and housemaids? does the creature suppose that *I* want his son? I—who never liked him—

who have never ceased to regret that Mrs. Matthews should have introduced him to us? Imagine Colonel Swayne reading such a letter as that about you!" And she poises the crumpled paper in her hand as if she waited for somebody to throw it at.

Ethel stands near the table with her eyes fixed on the floor. She has come in with her hat on, and makes a most charming picture of embarrassed concern. Fan sweeps round with the free eager gesture that is peculiar to her, and says :

"I'll ask Ethel before you, mamma, if you are showing the slightest justice in condemning Jack Huntley because of this impudent letter from his father."

"I don't want Ethel's opinion, nor yours either," rejoins Mrs. Rogers in a weaker voice and with a variety of indignant emotions struggling in her bosom. "What you have to answer for is that you have engaged yourself to Mr.

Huntley without speaking a word to me, or giving anybody the least idea that you cared for him. I call that conduct base myself."

"If you had chosen to watch me you might have seen that Jack and I were in love," says Fan doggedly.

"Had you any idea, Ethel, that they were in love? Answer me, had you any idea?" shrieks Mrs. Rogers, newly exacerbated by Fan's familiar reference to her sweetheart and by the downright way in which she speaks of their love.

"I will answer truthfully, auntie," responds Ethel, lifting up her soft innocent eyes: "I *had* an idea that Fanny was in love with Mr. Huntley. But I'm sorry, dear," she goes on addressing Fanny, "that you should think I wanted to 'pump' you, as it is called. I hadn't the slightest suspicion that you were *engaged* to Mr. Huntley, and as I never imagined such a thing, I don't quite see what secret I could want to find out."

"I didn't tell you because I knew you would repeat it to mamma. And we wished the thing kept secret," Fan says, "until Jack had heard from his father;" and here a small tremor of the lip gives hint that her tears are beginning to mutiny against her self-control and will drown it dismally if she's not careful.

"I have a grateful daughter, I must say!" cries Mrs. Rogers, addressing the ceiling over Fanny's head. "The *idea* of my child hiding such a secret from me! So, then, I suppose all your mysterious goings out and comings in lately mean that you and this Mr. Huntley have been constantly meeting?"

"Every day," replies Fan, with her eyes full of hardness and audacity, "and sometimes twice a day."

"That will do, Fanny: you have said enough," says Mrs. Rogers, fetching her dress a thump as she swoops round on her chair and inflates her petticoats. "I never

thought I should live to see this day. My confidence in you was unbounded. It's all over. You have deceived me dreadfully . . ."

And here her tears choke her and the rest is inarticulate whimpering, which being done she bolts out of her chair and dashes away from the room and is heard to bump drearily upstairs.

Ethel remains standing near the table. Fanny, with her bosom heaving and her cheeks as red as poppies with indignation, crosses the room and leans her elbow on the mantelpiece and her cheek on her hand.

There is a dead silence for some minutes, and then Ethel says in a meek timid voice, "This is very unfortunate, dear."

Fan does not hear, or takes no notice.


"Auntie," continues Ethel, after a few moments' pause, in the same meek and timid voice, "would never have objected so

violently to this engagement if it hadn't been for Colonel Swayne's unlucky visit and proposal to you. That has given her an idea of your beauty and what it can command."

Fan's glowing eyes turn upon Ethel, and she says :

"I am sorry for mamma. That old Mr. Huntley's letter was vilely insulting, and I wish I was a man that I could go and give him a good beating for writing such insolence. But it isn't Jack's fault. It's shamefully unjust to make *him* answerable for it. He wrote to tell his father of our engagement, not because he wanted his blessing, horrid old creature! but because Jack thought the old thing would help us, and then mamma couldn't have *any* objection."

She gives her foot a smart stamp and her eyes fill with tears; but she shakes them proudly off, and something in the action is so full of character that one




might almost tell her real nature by seeing it.

"You mustn't give him up, dear: you mustn't despair," says Ethel, approaching Fan by a step and then stopping and looking at her wistfully. "It's the old story: the course of true love . . . everybody knows that proverb and how true it is."

Fanny makes a lunge with her hand at the stubborn hair upon her forehead.

"Parents always do the wrong thing. Why does mamma fly at me like this? She might guess that I am madder than ever she can be at that impudent old man's letter: and she makes no allowance for my disappointment and trouble. People can't help falling in love. It's not my fault that Jack is dear to me . . . give him up indeed! I am sure I don't want that sort of advice."

"I said don't give him up, dear," exclaims Ethel softly.



"You need not advise me not to give him up, because I don't intend to do so," cries Fan passionately.

"You would be very foolish if you did. Things are sure to come right if you give them time. I think the most obstinate prejudice can be tired out by sweethearts loving each other firmly and defiantly," says Ethel; and a prettier instructor on such a point one could hardly wish to hear.

"Ethel, if you are not sorry for me, don't pretend to be," calls out Fanny. "I would much rather you should side with mamma than take my part with a sneer, as it were."

Ethel drops her eyes suddenly and answers with an averted face.

"You are harder upon me than anybody else. I think you must hate me. What harm have I done you? I can't help feeling sorry to think that your love is going to be made a great trouble

of by auntie's prejudices, and telling you so."

There must be fine art in the way in which she delivers herself of this meek protest, for Fan's generous soul is touched, and she runs up to her and puts her arm round her neck.

"I am very sorry, dear. I don't mean half what I say," she exclaims, with the tears again in her eyes. "I am bitterly fretted by Mr. Huntley's letter, and mamma's words and the worry and grief of the secret I have been hiding. I know that I shan't have a fair chance given me. Colonel Swayne will always be uppermost in mamma's mind, and she'll never be able to think of Jack without dislike, and he'll be insulted and driven out of the house if he calls."

"Wouldn't it be best to tell him not to call, at least, for the present?" says Ethel, looking quite a dove in Fan's embrace and hoping that Fan's arm isn't squeezing the feather in her hat against her neck. "You

will have hundreds of chances of meeting each other out of doors, and I feel sure that love is never so sweet as when it's stolen ;" and the little thing with a delightful smile tenderly writhes out of Fan's arms and stands looking at her with eyes humid with sensibility and concern.

"But it won't be fair to us, now that the truth's out, to make an underhand thing of it," exclaims Fanny gloomily. "I'm not going to be ashamed of loving Jack, and if he doesn't value his father's threats, I ought to help him by not allowing mamma to interfere between us."

"Still it wouldn't do to let him come to the house and perhaps be badly insulted, would it?" says Ethel, with a small burst of confidence.

But Fan is biting her under lip and knitting her brows and is evidently engaged in a fanciful conflict that carries her mind well away from the sense of her

cousin's words ; seeing which Ethel pulls up her skirt and steps up to her and stands on tiptoe and snatches a small faint kiss and walks softly out as from a sick room.

END OF VOL. II.



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